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# JEW IN ENGLISH FICTION

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THE  
JEW IN ENGLISH FICTION

BY  
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AUTHOR OF  
"OLD EUROPEAN JEWRIES" AND  
"THE REFORM MOVEMENT IN JUDAISM"

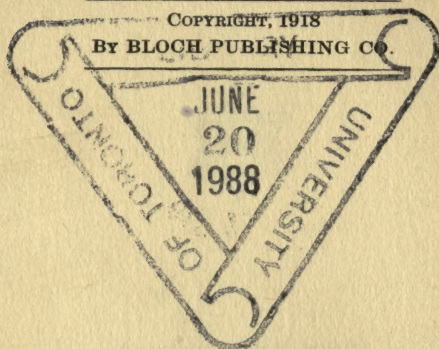


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DEDICATED

TO THE

MEMORY

OF

MY FIRST AND MOST LOVING TEACHER,

*My Mother.*



DEPOSITED

1871

REPORT AND ACCOUNT OF A TRIP TO

THE NORTH

## PREFACE

### TO THE LAST IMPRESSION

During the six years which have elapsed since the last edition of this book appeared a great number of novels and dramas containing Jews as principal or minor characters have been published. Most of these have no value as literature. They are ephemeral, and with few exceptions aroused scarcely more than passing interest.

Besides the fiction of this character, which has been written in English, many translations from the Yiddish have been made into English. These Yiddish tales belong to the category of the ghetto novel, which forms the subject of the closing chapter of this book. The principles there discussed are largely applicable to these stories and, *mutatis mutandis*, hold good of them as they do of the books treated in that chapter.

A few words, however, must be said touching a class of novels which has been called forth by the changes wrought in American Jewish life by the immigration from eastern Europe. Several writers have attacked the problems which have arisen from the new adjustments which must be made and with more or less acumen have set forth the conflicts between the old-world ghetto view-points and the American environment. Three of the most recent of these latter day American Jewish novels may be mentioned: "Witte Arrives," by Elias Tobenkin, is a well-told story of an immigrant boy who achieves material success but ends far from his starting point when he marries out of the faith. "The Abyss," by Nathan Kussy, is announced as a trilogy whereof the



first volume, which has appeared, is a powerful tale of the life of the underworld where the hero, kidnapped as a child, passes his youth; the Jewish element in this first part is negligible; it may appear in the future volumes. "The Chosen People," by Sidney Nyburg, presents an excellent diagnosis of the situation in a large American Jewish community. The antagonisms between the native American and the Russian Jewish elements are clearly set forth. These three writers will undoubtedly prove to be forerunners of a great number who will find material for novels in the kaleidoscopic life of modern American Jewry.

The original purpose of this volume was to subject to a critical analysis, from the Jewish standpoint, English fictional classics that have Jews as leading characters. I am loth to depart from that original purpose and therefore cannot give a place in the volume to recent novels which have not, and what is more, may not, find a place among the classics of English literature. However, in order to make the volume a comprehensive handbook of the subject it treats, a bibliography of the Jew in English fiction has been included in this new edition as an appendix. For this bibliography I am indebted to Miss Rebecca Schneider, who prepared this painstaking work originally in 1914 for the New York State Library School as a graduation requirement. The bibliography has been brought up to date.

DAVID PHILIPSON.

Cincinnati, 1918.



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# THE JEW IN ENGLISH FICTION.

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## I. INTRODUCTORY.

As portrayed in English fiction from the time of Elizabeth to our day, the Jew is almost Protean in his character, if we may judge from the various guises he has been made to assume, running the whole length from the villainy of Barabbas to the ideal nobleness of Mordecai. So remarkable a phenomenon is well worthy of investigation. The theme is of sufficient importance to demand earnest, careful, and unprejudiced consideration. The influence of these productions in shaping the popular conception of the Jew can not be overestimated, since the fascinating form wherein the matter is presented is particularly effective in leaving a deep and lasting impression on the mind of the reader.

Where philosophy, with its investigations into the cause, aim, and effect of existence, with its far-reaching inquiries and conclusions, attracts but the few eager and restless minds who would delve into the very mystery of things; where theology, the philosophy of the highest, requires a depth and breadth of comprehension far above the ordinary; where positive science is an ex-



acting mistress, demanding that exclusive devotion which only some choice spirits can or are willing to give; where historical investigation expects that search into past doings, customs, and thoughts, which can be satisfactorily accomplished only with the greatest labor and skill; where thus the pursuit of truth in any branch demands the discipleship of a lifetime and must be content with the least results, the many, impatient to be amused, nor desirous of exerting the mind overmuch, have found in the novel, "the modern epic," as Fielding terms it, and in the drama, the novel presented to the eye, their chief mental excitement and amusement. Where one will find delight in any of the heavier products of thought, a thousand will eagerly quaff of the waters which flow from the fountain-head of fiction.

The ordinary reader is carried along, adopts the conclusions offered, has his opinions shaped and modeled by the writer of fiction. How many are there whose whole knowledge of history, for example, has been derived from this source. There are historical, scientific, philosophical, theological, and political novels, and great is the influence they exert. They are mighty factors in modern culture and modern life. Their power is great for good or for evil, as their producers will. Of many minds they are the only pabulum. It is not my object to decry the trash which passes to-day under the

name of fiction, nor yet to extol the many productions of true genius which, presenting the phases of the development of human life in this attractive form, have been among the benefactions of mankind, for is there scarcely one who has not been held as by a charm in the power of "the Wizard of the North," or has not laughed and wept and pitied and grown indignant with Dickens, or has not marveled at the biting scorn and sarcasm, and been startled at the deep insight into human nature of Thackeray, or has not stood amazed at the minute investigation of the broad, deep, philosophical mind of the greatest of the female novelists, the representative *par excellence* of psychological analysis in fiction, or has not thought and pondered and studied, and pondered again o'er the lines of the myriad-minded dramatist, England's first genius, and of the many lesser lights that revolve about this sun.

To these the greatest license is given; they touch upon any and every subject, nothing human is foreign to them; none can bound the domain they may enter; the world is their field; all sorts and conditions of men offer material for treatment. Still there are but two evident instances that fiction, by offering a misrepresentation, has inflicted on innocent victims the greatest harm. Passion and prejudice readily communicate themselves from the page to the reader. Then ignorance, too, has impressed its

seal on many a work whose influence all argument and all proof have in vain attempted to counteract. And that the Jew has suffered in this respect can not be denied. He has been a favorite character in fiction, treated with all the prejudice and ill-feeling which characterized the sentiments of the multitude, until the appearance of Lessing's "Die Juden" and "Nathan der Weise." How he suffered from the evil effects which these works of the imagination produced may be gathered from the following fact: whenever in the eighteenth century Shylock was performed, the passions of the multitude were excited to such a pitch that it was found necessary to produce, immediately thereafter, "Nathan the Wise," that this might act as an antidote towards quieting the aroused passions which might have culminated in excesses involving great danger to the unfortunate Jews.

Two questions present themselves for solution in this introduction: First. Was and is it legitimate to introduce the Jew into works of fiction? And, secondly, if so, to what extent can this be carried? Before answering the first question a few remarks will be necessary. Fiction is a compound of truth and imagination; its lasting power lies in the correct blending of these two factors. Exaggeration makes it bizarre and grotesque. Discerning minds will readily discover its weakness and its strength, and, according to the predominance of either,



it will stand among the imperishable works of genius or disappear among the fleeting productions of the moment. Now, the truths which it lies within the province of the writer of fiction to touch, belong either to the inner world of human thought and emotion, the elaboration and development of which, in character, forms what we may term the analytical, psychological novel, or, if the novelist or the dramatist wishes to treat of external life—that is of real life, and desires to present his tale as containing elements thereof—he will portray probably such characters and scenes as possess something striking and different from that to which his readers are accustomed, and which can give a tangible hold to imaginative descriptions and events. This is what gives Scott his great and undying power; his Scotch descriptions and scenes came as a revelation to the reading world. They contain the element of truth and are drawn by a master hand. That is why Auerbach's *Dorfgeschichten* met with so generous a reception, because they dealt with scenes that had peculiarities sufficient to give them separate treatment.

Therefore, too, the modern Russian, Swedish, and Norwegian works and tales attract so many intelligent readers, because competent minds have grasped upon that which is peculiar, and blending this truth with their imagination's fancies, produce these works, if not of genius,

at least of great worth in enabling us to understand the lives and incidents they portray.

Does Jewish life present these peculiar features, or any peculiar features which make it proper material for the novelist, so that the Jew, being introduced into the work of fiction, may be a truthful picture, and not a caricature? This question we ask regarding Jewish life, as not included in the Jewish religion; this point will be touched further on. Here, in the portrayal of Jewish life, it is that we must distinguish between past and present. We will not for a moment deny that in the past, and in those instances of the present which strictly follow the traditional lines set by the past—in the so-called ghettos or Jewries of the world, voluntary or enforced—the Jew, as a man, apart from the Jew in religion, was and is a legitimate character to be introduced into fiction. His strict exclusiveness, his many peculiar habits, his (to the community) inexplicable customs, marked him off, as belonging to a nationality with peculiarities all its own. As, inclosed within the Ghetto he was cut off from all communication, except such as occasional business transactions required, so was he seemingly devoid of all sympathy with his surroundings. He had a national ideal; he regarded his present residence merely as a resting place in exile from the Holy Land. In many instances, he wore a costume by which he was distinguished. In short, his appearance,

habits, customs, desires, inclinations, longings, hopes, were different from those of his neighbors. All things conspired to keep him thus; he was oppressed, jeered at—the butt of ridicule and cruelty. A character so strange, so readily distinguishable, with manners and habits so marked, became, as may be expected, popular with writers and authors; especially as by exaggeration and falsification they could delight and please their hearers and readers. Had the writers of these mediæval and later tales kept within the bounds of truth and reason, none could object to their introducing the Jew into their works. There are tales of this very Jewish life, portraying the peculiarities and strangenesses of the Ghetto-existence, giving pictures of every phase and every custom of this life, which are truly delightful and instructive reading. They were inspired, however, by friendship, or, at least, by impartiality, instead of by ignorance, hatred, and malice. The ghetto stories, sketches and tales of Kompert, Franzos, Sacher-Masoch, Bernstein, and Kohn, as tales of the past, although containing so much that is strange and idiosyncratic, we feel to be perfectly proper, although they are often concerned with non-religious doings; and why? Because they portray what was once a true state of affairs. Even should they contain passages unfavorable to the Jews, such as some chapters of Auerbach's Spinoza, which tell of bigotry and



intolerance, yet, knowing them to be true, none can object; none who would have the virtues appear would attempt to veil the failings and the errors.

This was; it belongs to history; and the fiction that takes it as its theme is in reality historical fiction. Now, however, when the Jew has laid off all these peculiar customs; when he has stepped out of the Ghetto into the free light and air; when he has dropped his traditional distinguishing marks; when he in all has become like his neighbor—thinking like thoughts, indulging the same ideals, no longer a stranger in a strange land, nor looking upon his habitation as temporary, but filled with patriotic feeling for the welfare of whatever country he may inhabit; when, in all but religion, he is like unto all—every representation of the modern Jew, except in the religious light, in novel or in drama, in play or in tale, is a mark of gross ignorance, and, through ignorance, of gross evil and injustice. The prejudices of an early day have not yet died out, and this, coupled with the dense ignorance characterizing otherwise cultured people regarding Jews and Judaism, give these latter-day productions a truly pernicious power. From them many obtain their only knowledge of the Jews. The old thought of peculiarity and isolation is revived, if it ever had disappeared. Many who derive their knowledge from this literature never come into contact



with the misrepresented character; and if they should, and would find him or her different from the presentation, they would not regard the portrayal incorrect, but only look upon their new acquaintance as a *rara avis*—a different somebody from the usual class; for had they not been informed by their author that the Jews speak differently, that they act differently, than their Christian neighbors?

All such works written and published add but another layer to the dividing line already existing. They are unjust to the Jew; they are but new antagonistic elements with which he is forced to combat. Even if written without prejudicial intent, they contain the insidious seed which sinks deeply and produces poisonous and noxious weeds. An author has a superficial acquaintance, we will say, with some Jews; he has picked up, here and there, some Hebrew phrases; he has noted a few distinguishing customs among some classes of Jews; he has also met with some loud, uncultured characters among them. Without any knowledge of true Judaism whatsoever, he will now set himself up as a teacher, to inform, through the pages of a novel, the general public what the Jews are, how they live, how they act, how they speak. He commits an injustice of the greatest character; he makes them speak a frightful jargon; he does more to increase the already existing prejudice than many a better book can

undo; he gives them sentiments which are a disgrace to honest men; he at times tries to glaze over things by a kind word, or a pat on the back, as it were, but this is only the treacherous device that strengthens the wrong view presented. No worse enemy of the Jews exists; these novels are hidden thrusts; they are in truth as pernicious in their tendency as any anti-Semitic sheet ever published; they rest on a little superficial knowledge; they present, not the Jew, but a caricature; they introduce to us some coarse, loud individuals as Jews, and hence, as will be inferred from this, as types; they strengthen that widely prevalent notion of a peculiar people, and are to be denounced as falsities, as misrepresentations, as calumnies.

Because there are some vulgar, uncultured people among the Jews, is this a reason that such are to be specially represented as Jews? Because some Jews have grown suddenly rich, and are loudly ostentatious, is this a cause that the flagrant injustice be done, that they, with these characteristics, be held up by the name of their religion? 'Tis time that this should cease; 'tis time that those maligned and slandered should speak their word and counteract this dangerous and insidious influence; 'tis time at last that Jews altogether be not characterized and represented by the few who are what they are, not as Jews, but as men. Any man, be he Jew or Christian, Mohammedan or heathen, who

has been bred in ignorance, and has suddenly acquired a fortune, will be shoddy, for thus he thinks to air his importance, as his money is the only claim he has thereto, will be vulgar and loud, and generally unpleasant to cultured people; but his religion has nought to do therewith. That is the trait in human nature which makes the parvenu, who has been a favorite character for ridicule from ancient days to our time, made typical by Molière's famous presentation of Jourdain in "*Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*." But Molière speaks not of his parvenu's religion; he presents him as a type, that can be met with every day. How would not a book be decried, or else considered beneath notice, that would introduce an Episcopalian, or a Methodist, or a Presbyterian, as the representative of shoddiness, of vulgarity, of loudness! We can readily imagine what a reception such a work would receive. The author would be ridiculed, the statements made be denounced as false, or it might become a curiosity illustrative of the strange perversion of a mind that could couple Christianity with qualities with which that religion, as well as no other, has any thing to do. And yet there is as much shoddiness among all those classes as among the Jews; as much glitter and tinsel, as much parvenuism and loudness.

Culture takes time. The children of the upstart will be more cultured and refined than he;



his grandchildren still more so. Among us surely, in this land, there is no cause for any casting of stones; for the great and small fortunes have been acquired only comparatively lately, and the earliest ancestor of families which make even the greatest pretensions to culture is a very small distance of time off, when compared with that length of years back when the ancestors of the Jews, with the Greeks, comprised the culture of the world. In discussing any of these books, it is not apposite to adduce the fact that we all enjoy the broad humor and strange characteristics of the Irish, as presented in works of fiction; that Hugo portrays the French character in its distinctiveness; that Stinde seizes upon the peculiarities of Berlin life; that Howells sets forth the traits of American society—all this means something different—those are national peculiarities, which characterize only those depicted; but the qualities attributed to the Jew in these works are such as can belong to any man. Further, it is neither legitimate nor truthful to treat the Jews as nationalities are treated. There are no Jewish national traits; as Englishmen, they have the qualities of Englishmen, and so with every nation among whom they may dwell. The Jewish nation ceased to exist over eighteen hundred years ago; for centuries the Jews were a people without a country owing to the hostility of Christian legislation, but since the close of the

eighteenth century when the American Republic was born and the emancipation of the Jews in European lands began, they have been admitted gradually to citizenship among the various western nations of Europe and incorporated into the national life. But the world has not yet learned this lesson completely. Unfortunately, the doctrine must still be preached that Jews are to be contrasted with Christians, not with Englishmen, Germans, or Americans.

Following this line of thought, there is but one manner in which the modern Jew can be truthfully represented in fiction, and that is as the follower and confessor of his religion; and this only by such as have made a long and exhaustive study of the same. Whether the presentation offered be true or false, favorable or unfavorable, is another question; but as long as the fictionist keeps within these lines, he is at least faithful unto the feelings and sentiments of the Jews themselves in this respect. Then it becomes the province of the critic to determine whether the writer has given a true statement of the religious acts and customs or not. As George Eliot, with perfect propriety, introduced into her earlier tales the Dissenters, and gave a vivid picture of their religious manners, habits, and customs; as Scott portrays the Scotch Covenanters, with all their fire, their obstinacy, their dogged determination, and their habit of introducing religious discussions at all times, so

that Mause Headrigg, for example, has become a character fixed and typical; as Hawthorne now and then discourses on the religious customs of the New England Puritans; so, too, and so only, are the Jew and the Jewish religion to be employed for fiction's purposes, if they are to be employed at all, in novels and plays representing modern life. One great novelist of our days alone has done this, the writer of "Daniel Deronda;" if correct or not in her presentation, is a question to be discussed later on.

The name Jew is the proud cognomen of the confessors of that parent religion, through whose medium the truth of the one God was divulged to the world. However, ere they are Jews they are men. As Jews, they stand a distinctive religious community; as men, they are as their neighbors, one with them in all else. If they are to be distinguished from them, it is only in this; in all else there is nothing peculiar. Every representation as aught else is false. Christian and Jew are lost in that wider relationship of man, as Lessing's Nathan so well says to the Templar: "Are Christian and Jew such before they are men? Oh! would that I had found in you one whom it sufficed to be called man!"



## II. MARLOWE'S "JEW OF MALTA."

In the works of fiction, both dramas and novels, whereof I shall treat, it is not my purpose to go into an exhaustive criticism except in so far as this is necessary for a full exposition of the Jewish portions. In regard to these I shall aim to point out in how far the presentation is correct, where the writer was actuated by prejudice, and where the Jewish character has been misunderstood either for good or for ill. I shall include only the productions of such authors as have gained eminence in the world of letters, for their names lend a charm and an influence to their writings which those of less note could not and can not hope to attain. The first work in point of time (we shall be guided by the dates of the appearance of the various works) is the "Jew of Malta," by Christopher Marlowe, of whose "mighty line," Ben Jonson speaks with admiration. This play, with the atrocious character of Barabbas, the most villainous, perhaps, on the English stage, gives us an excellent opportunity to judge of the opinion in which the Jews were held, for Barabbas is meant to be representative, and the play was exceedingly well received by the populace.

It must have been written, as has been pointed out, after the year 1588, since in the prologue occur the words, "now that the Guise is dead," referring to the assassination of the third duke of Guise, in 1588. Whether the conception of the character was original with Marlowe or not, we can not determine; its plot, as was the case with the plays of most of the English dramatists of that period, may have been borrowed from some tale of which all traces are lost. It has been suggested that owing to its unrelieved cruelty, it may have had its source in some Spanish novel, but the Spaniards felt no more prejudiced toward the Jews than did any other nation; the hatred was the same throughout Christian Europe. One portion of the play, namely, that in which the heir to the throne of Turkey confers the great honor on the Jew of making him Governor of Malta, may have been suggested by the following circumstance, rumors of which may have reached England, and which, without exact knowledge, the poet may have perverted and used for his play. In the sixteenth century, some years before the composition of this drama, a Jew, Joseph Nassi, had played a great rôle at the Turkish court, and had been a favorite of the Sultan Soliman, but still more had the Crown Prince Selim (note the name of the Prince Selim Calymath) been attached to him. This Jew frustrated the designs of France against Turkey,

brought Venice to terms, inasmuch as it was through his agency and advice that the Turks attacked and captured the Isle of Cyprus from Venice, and for his fidelity and his services he was named by the Sultan, Duke of Naxos and ruler of the Cyclades. It is quite possible that the story of the remarkable career of this Joseph Nassi became known, and, being interpreted according to the general conception held of the Jews, it was concluded that he could have risen to this eminence only by means of deception and extreme wickedness; by this distortion of the true facts the play may have a thread of an historical foundation, viz: that one fact, that a Jew was made governor of an island through the instrumentality of the Turks. But apart from this, which is at best but a mere conjecture, the drama lacks all probability, both in history and in fact, as far as the Jewish portions are concerned. In history, because at the time that the play was written there were no Jews in Malta, and if there were they were so in secret, while here they are represented as possessing wealth and power and as professing their religion openly. As they were expelled from Spain in 1492, so were they driven from all the lands over which Spain exerted any power or influence, such as Sicily and other islands of the Mediterranean, among them Malta (vide Zunz *Zur Geschichte und Literatur*, 508, 528), and they did not return to these localities until they were



earnestly solicited to do so, with the promise that they would not be disturbed or maltreated, the return taking place in the year 1728. The title is, therefore, unfortunate, but this may be only a minor point; it is, at best, not meant to be a presentation of what was thought of the Jews in Malta but in England. It has been stated frequently that neither Marlowe nor Shakespeare is to blame for the characters they present, as there were no Jews in England at the time, they having been expelled by Edward I., in 1291, and not permitted to reside there until the year 1656; that the Jewish characters of these poets were but what they learned from hearsay, or from the perusal of foreign works, and, therefore, they personally harbored no ill-will; but it has been conclusively shown of late that there were Jews in England during that period (see Lucien Wolf's *Menasseh ben Israel*, *Introduct.* XIV). The dramatist, with his strong love for intensity, which he shows in all his chief characters, saw, in the generally accredited reputation of the Jews as usurers, an opportunity of satisfying his own love of exaggeration and the prejudices of the rabble. "The overloaded sensational atrocities of the Jews of Malta," are so marked that nought but the blindest prejudice could have prevented any one from at once seeing that even the most debased of human kind could not have perpetrated them. Such was the ideal Jew of popular ignorance

and intolerance, at a time when these unfortunates were looked upon as a "whetstone to keep one's Christianity sharp upon," and to these passions of the multitude Marlowe truckled, making of Barabbas "a mere monster exulting in crime, for its own sake, in the most impossible way." It seems to me that even the name Barabbas was chosen with a purpose; for that name recalled to the Christian populace the thief in whose stead Christ was crucified, and would be more apt than any other, with the possible exception of Judas Iscariot, to arouse the wrath of the masses, if such arousal were necessary. The play itself is one long recital of the wickedness and the monstrosities of the Jew; it abounds in preposterous and ridiculous assertions. The first two acts are quite strong, the last three form a string of impossibilities even more absurd than those which the first part of the play contains. There are a few instances wherein the dramatist strikes a true note in Jewish life and Jewish character, a very few, and these we will discuss first. In his opening speech, Barabbas says:

"And thus methinks should men of judgment frame  
Their means of traffic from the vulgar trade,  
And as their wealth increaseth, so inclose  
Infinite riches in little room.—(Act I, Sc. I.)

This represents, in truth, the Jewish policy in those ages of persecution. At any moment, at

the caprice of the king they might be expelled, at the instigation of the demagogue they might be attacked or mobbed, and hence it was exceedingly necessary that they should have their wealth, their only source of power and the only reason wherefore they were at all tolerated, in as small a compass as possible, so as to be able to carry it with them to distant lands, to be driven to which was so often their fate in those dark days.

Another glimpse of truth we have, and this is one of the bright spots in the early parts of the play, in the wondrous love Barabbas is made to feel for his daughter Abigail—

“I have no charge nor many children,  
But one sole daughter whom I hold as dear  
As Agamemnon did his Iphigen  
And all I have is hers.”—(ACT I, SC. I.)

And further on—

“So they spare me, my daughter, and my wealth!”  
—(IBID.)

And again, when the great loss has come upon him, and his riches are to be taken from him:

“But whither wends my beauteous Abigail?  
Oh! what has made my lovely daughter sad?  
What, woman! moan not for a little loss.  
Thy father hath enough in store for thee.”



And in taking leave of her, he says:

"Farewell, my joy; and by my fingers take  
A kiss from him that sends it from his soul."

—(Act II, Sc. I.)

All writers seem to recognize this love of the Jew for his own; and although Barabbas later disowns and curses his child, when she turns apostate, still is this love, as thus set forth in the first part of the drama, the only redeeming quality in the wretched character. No Jew ever employed his child for the purposes that Barabbas is made to employ Abigail, to be a go-between, to pretend to be desirous of entering the convent, to become a party to wrong-doing. The pure, innocent girl, the ideal of Jewish home life, was guarded as the apple of the eye by the parents until she was given into the safe-keeping of the husband. If there is one aspect of the Jewish life that kept itself pure, it is the home life; and to represent the Jew, as this play does, as giving such counsel to his daughter, is preposterous.

Another true word Barabbas is made to utter; had it been observed by the dramatist himself, he would not have drawn the Jew as he did, when it was only too palpable that the populace would readily regard it as a faithful picture of the Jews in general.

In Scene II, Act I, he says:

"Some Jews are wicked as some Christians are;  
But say the tribe that I descended of

Were all in general cast away for sin,  
Shall I be tried for their transgression?  
The man that dealeth righteously shall live."

Never was a truer word spoken; every Jew has been made responsible for the acts of every other Jew. It is so with all small and persecuted bodies, as happened, for example, in the case of the early Christians in the Roman Empire, and of the Quakers in England. Every pretext is seized upon to oppress, and the wicked actions of one, no matter how virtuous or righteous the remainder, are cited as characteristic of all; and no community has had to suffer more from this than the Jews. "The man that dealeth righteously shall live," no matter to what race, nation, faith, or party he may belong.

The *motif* of the play is the usury of the principal character. Marlowe wishes to develop the character of the usurer, to show to what lengths his passion for money can drive him; and in giving this quality to the Jew, he makes it, together with the hatred borne toward the Christians, the fundamental cause of all the worst crimes that the most depraved of natures can carry into execution. This *motif* is plainly stated in the prologue, when Machiavel, who is introduced for the purpose of reciting the prologue, says:

"I come not, I,  
To read a lecture here in Britain,  
But to present the tragedy of a Jew,

Who smiles to see how full his bags are crammed,  
Which money was not got without my means."

And when Barabbas attempts to justify himself in the words cited above, he is answered by the Governor:

"Excess of wealth is cause of covetousness,  
And covetousness, oh! 't is a monstrous sin."

—(ACT I, SC. II.)

Throughout the play we are given to understand that Barabbas was a great usurer, and through this that it was a general characteristic of the Jews. That usury is a great crime, none will deny; all moral codes denounce the practice, and rightly the usurer is looked down upon as among the lowest of mankind. That in the times to which this play refers and in which it was written, many Jews followed this occupation, can neither be denied, nor will I now offer the excuses that all other avenues were closed to them, that if they did not charge a high rate of interest, they would receive nothing, for whenever they lent out their money, it was at a great risk, owing to the uncertainty whether they would ever receive it again. To the following fact, however, not generally known, it may be well to call attention. It was not the Jews only who practiced usury in those lawless, troubled times, and what is more, usurious as they were, they were not as hard nor as grinding as were the Christians, who could and who did pursue the same occupation; for, when by law it was for-



bidden the Jews in France to exact usury, the populace demanded and the nobles advised that the law be repealed, for the Christian usurers, to whom they were now compelled to resort, were so exorbitant and outrageous in their demands that the Jews were kind indeed in comparison. In deference to the popular cry the decree was repealed.

Bernhard of Clairvaux, as early as the twelfth century, tells us that the Christian usurers, who, as he says, should really not be called Christians, were in their practices much worse and more exacting than the Jews. Popular poets in their songs refer to this terrible vice as common among the Christians. Brother Berthold, in one of his sermons, addresses his hearers: "Ye miserly, avaricious usurers, how will you answer at the last judgment the accusations of these poor creatures, whom you are robbing, and who will appear against you?" And many another voice of witnesses then living could be cited in proof of the statement that this abomination was practiced by many others besides the Jews. We shall have occasion to again refer to this fact in a later criticism. Wrong is it, therefore, to make this a Jewish characteristic, as it is considered; practiced it was by some Jews, but Jewish it is not.

Judge, now, from the following, what was the purpose of the author, whether he did not permit his desire to exaggerate, coupled with the

popular opinion of the Jew and his wish to subserve this popular opinion, to run away with him, and produce, not a man, but a monster delighting in wickedness for its own sake. First, a characterization of the Jews, and then Barabbas's description of himself:

"We Jews can fawn like spaniels when we please,  
And when we grin we bite; yet are our looks  
As innocent and harmless as a lamb's.  
I learned in Florence how to kiss my hand,  
Heave up my shoulders when they call me dog,  
And duck as low as any barefoot friar;  
Hoping to see them starve upon a stall,  
Or else be gathered for in the synagogue,  
That when the offering basin comes to me  
Even for charity, I may spit into 't."

—(ACT II, SC. III.)

What a summing-up! the lowest, the vilest qualities are here enumerated: sycophancy, hypocrisy, cruelty, hard-heartedness, revenge! No wonder that a populace, ignorant, unthinking, superstitious, should be goaded on to all excesses imaginable, when they heard such words as these. The Jews were seen only in such pictures; it was the same spirit that produced works like those of Eisenmenger, Pfefferkorn, *et hoc genus omne*—the spirit of hatred and prejudice, or of religious bigotry and fanaticism.

Add to the effect of such lines these which occur a little further on, and it will not be difficult to imagine all the venom they were pro-

ductive of. Says the Jew, in answer to his daughter:

“It’s no sin to deceive a Christian,  
For they themselves hold the principle,  
Faith is not to be held with heretics,  
For all are heretics that are not Jews.  
This follows well, and therefore, daughter, fear not.”  
—(ACT II, SC. III.)

If ever doctrine was un-Jewish, this is. With all the provocation they received, and which would have made a retaliation on their oppressors, in words, in feelings, and in deeds, if possible, both natural and justifiable, we can find in Jewish writings, representative of Jewish thought, nothing that breathes such a spirit. If it was indulged in by individuals, goaded on by the treatment to which they were subjected, it was not Jewish, and this drama is certainly meant to present the Jew, typical as he then was, and his feelings toward the Christians. Let us hear what some of the best minds and loftiest characters among the Jews have to say on this same subject of the feelings to be entertained toward non-Jews. In a work written some time before this, we find the following sentences: “Deceive none intentionally in your transactions; also, no non-Jew.” “If a Jew or a non-Jew come to you and desire to borrow money, and you wish not to lend it, because you fear that you will not receive it again, say not that you have no money.” “In your inter-



course with non-Jews, act with the same uprightness that you manifest toward Jews; call the attention of the non-Jew to his errors. If a non-Jew ask you for advice, tell him truly what you think." Another speaks in the following strain: "Such as deceive and rob non-Jews belong to the category of those who blaspheme the name of God." "In trade and in social intercourse, no person, no matter what may be his religion, may be deceived by word or deed."

Compare this internal evidence, taken from the writings of the Jews themselves, with that line, "It's no sin to deceive a Christian," and compare, too, these statements of the persecuted with the edicts, expressions, and decrees found in the works of the writers of the religion in power, whenever they refer to the Jews, and then conceive how grotesquely false a representation this statement is of the teachings of the Jewish religion, as interpreted by its best and most competent minds.

Yet all this is nought, when compared with the terrible and shocking description Barabbas gives of himself and his doings, so monstrous and impossible that it is indeed strange that, even in that benighted time of prejudice, it should not have called forth condemnation. This is the recital of the accomplishments and deeds of the master villain:

"As for myself, I walk abroad of nights  
And kill sick people groaning under walls;  
Sometimes I go about and poison wells,  
And now and then, to cherish Christian thieves,  
I am content to lose some of my crowns,  
That I may, walking in my gallery,  
See 'em go pinioned along by my door.  
Being young, I studied physic, and began  
To practice first upon the Italian;  
There I enriched the priests with burials,  
And always kept the sexton's arm in ure,  
With digging graves and ringing dead men's knells."  
—(Act II., Sc. III.)

And so he goes on to tell all his numerous crimes. In the play, he is made to set two innocent young men upon one another, that they kill each other; he poisons a whole nunnery, kills friars, curses his daughter with curses loud and deep, betrays the city into the hands of the Turks, invents infernal machines wherewith to slaughter all the Turks; so that, in comparison with him, Iago becomes almost a figure of light. He is merely a monster of crime impossible in existence; nothing more nor less.

It can be no one's intention to justify him, for he is guilty of well-nigh every crime imaginable. Black indeed must have been the opinion of the Jews, if such a play of horrors could be even received. But received it was, and that, too, with favor. The greatest actor of the day produced it, and the pit rang with applause; such was the opinion of the unhappy people,

whose only crime was that they were a living reproach to the extravagant claims of the religion reigning triumphant. It was written with no conception or study of the Jewish character; not one fundamental trait, except domestic affection, is mentioned, and even that is later subverted. It has retained its place as a classic of the language; and, although its extravagances are no longer believed, still is it proof of that intolerance which "could treat them (the Jews) with an amount of insolence and injustice which, in the eyes of a modern audience, half deprives the Christian of his right of sympathy when the Hebrew's day of vengeance arrives." The Hebrew longs for no day of vengeance; he thanks God that those dark days of bigotry and hatred are past, which made even possible the construction by an author, and the reception by the public, of a production so dark, so monstrous, so unreal, as "The Jew of Malta."



### III. SHAKESPEARE'S "MERCHANT OF VENICE."

Of all the Jewish characters in the domain of English fiction, none is more widely known, or has been the subject of so much discussion, as Shylock, in Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice." Of all the creations of the genius of the world-poet, none, we may say, with the possible exception of Hamlet, the most Shakespearean of Shakespeare's characters, has received greater attention than the Jew as by him portrayed. From all points of view has he been regarded—as the incarnation of wickedness on the one hand, as the injured party seeking redress on the other; as the villain by this critic, as the justifiable plaintiff by that; as the Christian-baiting fire-eater by one, as the ardent defender of his religion and his race by another. His motives, his actions, his character, his every word, have been subjected to examination and criticism, and every one has found something to censure, to excuse, to reprove, to justify, to condemn, to condone.

It has been stated that Shakespeare did not intend to give a picture of the Jews in general. We think he did; certain it is, at all events, that the portrayal has always, by the general

reader and student, been taken as representative of the Jewish character, and in this light it must be treated. Perhaps in the course of our investigation, contrary to the usual acceptance, we shall find that Shylock was in the right; that the sympathies of Shakespeare were with him; that, in causing him to be defeated by a mere quibble, he demonstrated the strength of his cause, but yet could not permit the Jew to issue victorious over so many noble Christians, in the face of the general feelings entertained toward the Jews at that time—feelings which had received favorably and applauded to the echo the atrocities of the "Jew of Malta." But to the play first; to an analysis of its motives and characters later. In this, as in many of his dramas, Shakespeare took his plot from others; in truth, he combines two stories, that of the Three Caskets, related in the collection of tales known as the "*Gesta Romanorum*," and that of the Pound of Flesh. This latter story was old, and had appeared in many forms. The first mention we can find of the flesh story is in Hindoo mythology. From there it must have traveled westward, and with the sentiments harbored toward the Jew, was brought into connection with his relations to the Christians.

As early as the fourth century, in the time of Elaine, the mother of Constantine, we find it noted. In Europe it gained its foot-hold from the conception that the creditor, according to

the Roman law, had full power over the debtor, and could do with him as he pleased. The story appears in eleven different versions, into four of which no Jew is introduced. These are all imaginative productions. There is but one account of this transaction which rests on a historical foundation. This reverses the positions of the Jew and the Christian. In his life of Pope Sixtus V., Gregorio Letti, the biographer, records the following episode: In 1587, Paul Mario Sechi, a merchant of Rome, gained information that Sir Francis Drake, the English Admiral, had conquered San Domingo. He communicated this piece of news to Simone Cenade, a Jewish merchant, to whom it appeared incredible, and he said: "I bet a pound of flesh that it is untrue." "And I lay one thousand *scudi* against it," replied Sechi. A bond was drawn up to that effect. After a few days, news arrived of Drake's achievement, and the Christian insisted on the fulfillment of his bond. In vain the Jew pleaded, but Sechi swore that nothing could satisfy him but a pound of the Jew's flesh. In his extremity, the Jew went to the governor. The governor of the city promised his assistance, communicated the case to Pope Sixtus, who condemned both to the galleys—the Jew for making such a wager, the Christian for accepting it. They released themselves from imprisonment by each paying a fine of two thousand *scudi* toward the hospital of



the Sixtine bridge, which the pope was then erecting.

It is not to be for a moment supposed, as has been suggested, that Shakespeare changed the rôles of the Christian and the Jew. He but followed the ancient traditional story, which had long been circulated and was well known. From the similarity, both of circumstances and of names, there can be little doubt but that the poet obtained this portion of the plot of the play from a tale called "The Adventures of Gianotto," published at Milan, in 1558, in a collection entitled "Il Pecarone." In this tale, with but a few variations, we have the story as detailed in the "Merchant of Venice." There was also a ballad, "Gernutus, the Jew of Venice," with the same subject-matter, and another ballad, entitled "The Northern Lord," of much the same tenor. In all of these versions of the story, there is the same subterfuge of not shedding a drop of blood; two of them introduce a woman in disguise, who, like Portia, by this same argument, frees the debtor, and discomfits and defeats the Jew-creditor. The plot is borrowed; Shakespeare's treatment thereof, however, is entirely his own. Many critics, among others the German Bodenstedt, have looked upon the "Jew of Malta" as the forerunner of Shylock. In time it was, but in nought else; if any thing at all, but a few trifling hints were caught from it. There is all the difference be-

tween the two plays that can be imagined as existing between a frightful and hideous caricature, which Marlowe's Jew is, and a heroic, intensely tragic figure, proud, deep, at times rising even to grandeur, such as Shakespeare's Jew is; all the difference between a representation calculated to stir only the worst passions of a listening multitude, and a characterization delineated with the purpose of doing some good and justice to the despised race, in showing plainly that if they felt as they did, there was ample cause therefor; they were only following out the lessons taught them by their Christian neighbors. Without considering now whether or not the sentiments uttered by Shylock were Jewish, which we shall do later on, let us first study the character as presented, and learn whether, throughout the play, sufficient reasons are not given for the actions as portrayed, and whether the ending of the whole is not in deference to the spirit of the time and of centuries later, which the poet could not overcome; for how could a "villain Jew" gain the better of his foes? That Shakespeare joined in the vulgar feeling of prejudice which then existed, we can scarcely say when he drew this character. Shylock has the better of all his adversaries in every argument. Their reasoning is shorn of all its strength when he brings against them his "tremendous artillery of withering scorn and unanswerable fact." Nowhere in the play does

any one for a moment hold strength against Shylock, until at the end, with all arrayed against him, he is overwhelmed and broken by an ingenious trick which his enemies eagerly seize upon.

What lends the atrocious aspect to the play is the pound of flesh, but only with a bond of this character could the poet's purpose be accomplished. The Jew is actually victorious and triumphant in all but point of fact; the arguments are all in his favor; beneath the surface a deep current runs, which he who follows can understand. There are beautiful and tender spots in his character; it is only when all the wrongs imaginable have been heaped upon him—curses against his nation, vile abuse and contumely against himself, insults against his religion, scorn and invective against his daily mode of life and business—that his nature rebels, that thoughts and plans of revenge arise within him. But let us examine this more in detail. The play opens with an account of Antonio the merchant's affairs; he has all his wealth out on venture, and is sad and anxious. To him comes his bosom friend, Bassanio, who has squandered his patrimony by his spendthrift habits, has borrowed money from his friends without prospect of repaying them, and now, when his fortunes are at the lowest ebb, will make one bold stroke of speculation, try to win the hand of an heiress, and set up an establishment with her



money; but, before the prize can be won, he needs the money to deck himself out properly, to appear before the lady he would woo. For this purpose he approaches Antonio. The latter is in narrow straits; he can not aid his friend personally. Bassanio is authorized to borrow sufficient for his needs in Antonio's name.

Antonio's credit must have been low, indeed, if they had to resort to Shylock, the hated Jew, for the loan. Shylock is introduced in conversation with Bassanio; he weighs his words and reasons well, carefully recounts Antonio's ventures, and concludes that he may take his bond. Every thing goes well thus far. Antonio comes upon the scene; Shylock ruminates and meditates a long time; he intends to lend the money all the while, but ere he promises to do so, he will drive home a pointed shaft; he will show his petitioners how little cause they have to expect favor from him:

"Signor Antonio, many a time and oft,  
In the Rialto, you have rated me  
About my moneys and my usances.  
Still have I borne it with a patient shrug;  
For suffering is the badge of all our tribe;  
You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog,  
And spit upon my Jewish gaberdine,  
And all for use of that which is mine own.  
Well, then, it now appears you need my help:  
Go to, then; you come to me and you say,  
'Shylock, we would have moneys;' you say so;  
You, that did void your rheum upon my beard,

And foot me, as you spurn a stranger cur  
 Over your threshold: moneys is your suit.  
 What should I say to you? Should I not say,  
 'Hath a dog money? Is it possible  
 A cur can lend three thousand ducats?' Or  
 Shall I bend low and, in a bondman's key,  
 With bated breath, and whispering humbleness,  
 Say this:  
 'Fair sir, you spit on me on Wednesday last;  
 You spurned me such a day; another time  
 You called me—dog; and for these courtesies  
 I'll lend you thus much moneys?'"

—(ACT I, SC. III.)

What a world of reason and argument here! What finely turned scorn and sarcasm! This can not be answered; he has been insulted as a man, as a merchant, as a Jew; his pride, his manhood, so long compelled to bear all with a patient shrug, here breaks forth with vehemence against those who had thus trampled upon him; all the pent-up passion bursts its bounds, and the outraged feelings express themselves in words. And his statements can not be gain-said. All that Antonio can say is a dogged "I am like to call thee so again, to spit on thee again, to spurn thee, too." Here speaks the feeling of intolerance of the time; no consideration, no compassion; here lies a rebuke to the enemies of the Jew. After all the vehement exclamations of his wrongs, he is met by a "And I will do so again." Can, we may imagine the poet asking, it be expected that aught but feelings of hatred toward his op-

pressors fill the breast of the Jew, of any man who is thus treated? On this line the character of Shylock is worked out; he is given no mercy, no quarter; he expects none, and he gives none. Cruelty, wrong, hatred, and oppression have gradually congealed all his kindlier motives toward his Christian neighbors. This, it would seem to any observer, would be the natural conclusion. Shakespeare, from his vantage ground, was justified in taking for granted that hatred and desire for revenge would exist in the Jew's heart, judged he him from his knowledge of human nature.

Shylock offers to lend the money for three months on the giving of a bond by Antonio, that if the money is not paid, he shall be permitted to cut a pound of flesh from his body. This is acceded to, considered even kind; they call him now "gentle Jew," and find "there is much kindness in the Jew." Thus far we have Shylock presented to us in purely business transactions. He next appears to us in his home. He has a daughter whom he fondly loves, for she is the only offspring of his beloved Leah. As a tender father, he intrusts every thing to this daughter, and she, perfidious to her trust, robs him, leaves his house to marry with a Christian, and acts the rôle of the ungrateful, indutiful child. He is wounded where the wound rankles most keenly; his beloved child has turned traitorous. Rather would he see her



dead at his feet, than to have married with the Christian. His hard-earned wealth has been taken; he is cruelly and mercilessly twitted by the unfeeling gentlemen of Venice; worst of all, he hears that the ring given him by his beloved wife has been exchanged by his daughter for a monkey. Love is trampled on; affection is outraged; his enemies gloat over his pain and his misfortunes; all the warm blood freezes in his veins, the tender feelings he may have had become hardened into stone. They have railed at him and derided him; they have stolen his child and his fortune. They have insulted his name and his religion. The poet shows every cause why Shylock should have acted as he did, and when he heard of Antonio's losses, it were unnatural that he should not rejoice. They did not treat him so well that he should now show mercy. How he silences them, when in pleading for their friend, Antonio, he rises to the dignity of defender of an outraged and cruelly treated race! How the thunder of his words overwhelms them with rushing sound and force. "He hath disgraced me and hindered me half a million; laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies, and what's his reason? I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same

weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? If you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his suffrance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villainy you teach me, I will execute, and it shall go hard, but I will better the instruction." (Act III, Scene I.) In this passage it is that Shakespeare shows that if the Jew hate the Christian, it is not without cause; he presents the Jew here as he would any man who, insulted, derided, mocked in all his dearest interests and connections by those upon whom he can not retaliate, now, when the power is in his hands, rejoices that his day has come. That this is natural can not be denied. Antonio himself expected nothing else, for when he borrowed the money, he said: "If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not as to thy friends, but lend it rather to thine enemy, who, if he break, thou mayest, with better face, exact the penalty." (Act I, Scene III.) And it seems strangely inconsistent that Antonio, knowing and expecting this, should have awaited any other fate at the hands of his enemy. The time

for the redeeming of the bond is drawing nigh. Bassanio, living in luxury and basking in the sun of beauty and of pleasure, forgets all about his friend until he is awakened to the extremity by a letter. Pressed, he makes known his negligence, is dispatched by Portia with a sufficient sum, and more, to redeem the bond, but arrives too late. Shylock will accept no money; he wants revenge; he will have his bond. It is all right in law; the laws of Venice may not be transgressed. He is pressed by all to show mercy, he to whom mercy never was shown, and when asked by the Duke, "How shalt thou hope for mercy, rendering none?" he again gives one of those unanswerable arguments of his which effectually silences all opposition. In argument he always has the stronger side:

"What judgment shall I dread, doing no wrong?  
 You have among you many a purchased slave,  
 Which, like your asses, and your dogs and mules,  
 You use in abject and in slavish parts,  
 Because you bought them; shall I say to you,  
 Let them be free, marry them to your heirs?  
 Why sweat they under burdens? Let their beds  
 Be made as soft as yours, and let their palates  
 Be seasoned with rich viands? You will answer,  
 The slaves are ours; so do I answer you:  
 The pound of flesh which I demand of him  
 Is dearly bought, 'tis mine, and I will have it.  
 If you deny me, fie upon your law!  
 There is no force in the decrees of Venice.  
 I stand for judgment; answer, shall I have it?"

—(ACT IV, SC. I.)



The law is on his side; the court can not answer him; he is victorious. At the last moment a messenger arrives with the news that a learned judge has come from Padua, who will undertake the case. Portia, in the guise of a lawyer, enters. After trying to move Shylock from his purpose, the judge seems to give in to him, but, at the last moment, by a quibble, turns the scale, he is to shed no drop of blood; he is to take exactly one pound—as if he might not have taken less if he so willed. This quibble, a loop-hole of escape, is readily grasped. Shylock is dumbfounded and defeated. Ridiculed, scorned, mocked, he goes forth, deprived of his goods, compelled to turn Christian, forced to recognize his faithless child and give her of his wealth.

Throughout the play, then, as we have briefly noted those portions most necessary to an understanding of the Jew's position, we feel that he has the better of his enemies; his reasonings are potent, his wrath and indignation just; his injured feelings as parent, as merchant, as man, as Jew, excite compassion. I have referred to the remarkable advance made over the delineation of the Jew in Marlowe's play, and will take occasion to quote the words of an acute thinker, who says: "No one can carefully compare Shylock with Barabbas, without recognizing a purpose to modify and soften the popular feeling toward the Jew, to picture a man, where

Marlowe painted a monster, if not indeed to mirror for Christians their own injustice and cruelty." The one atrocious element of the play, which has caused all the wrongs of Shylock to be overlooked, and has withdrawn all sympathy from him, is the pound of flesh; it has been sufficient to cover his name with obloquy, and make it a by-word. This is the one point wherein Shakespeare's otherwise humane and noble production is guilty of gross injustice.

But, as stated above, something was necessary to defeat the Jew; he could not, with the feelings and animosities that existed toward him at that time, issue entirely victorious; that would have seemed ridiculous. The feelings of the poet, however, are with him; he is arguing the cause of an oppressed race; he did not desire to press the unfortunates still lower and add another burden to the heavy load they had to carry, as the play unexpectedly proved, for it was not understood; he tried to give reasons for their supposed actions and feelings, and to mitigate the harsh sentiments of the Christians. It had all been well done had not this element of the pound of flesh been introduced; any thing less atrocious (if the Jew, in deference to popular opinion had to be defeated in the end) had served the purpose better, especially as it is so peculiarly un-Jewish. It had been more appropriate to have reversed the rôles of the two religions, for even

had the Jews had such desires, Christianity, wielding the scepter of power, could readily have incapacitated them. History plainly tells which of the two caused the blood to flow, and in its fierceness sacrificed hecatombs upon hecatombs of human victims to its hatred. If it be pointed out that the fierce spirit of retaliation which Shylock assumes when he demands that flesh is Jewish, because the *lex talionis* is embodied in the Mosaic law, we need only refer to the later Jewish law books, commentaries on and explanations of the Mosaic code, wherein it is expressly noted that no literal interpretation of this law was ever applied or intended, that restitution in money was all that could be asked or required. When the money, therefore, is offered to Shylock, had he acted in the sense of the Jewish law he would have accepted it; but the Roman law permitted the creditor to beat, maltreat, maim, mangle the debtor to his heart's content, for he was his property, and on the Roman law the case rests. When Shylock is defeated, he is not so in law; even here he has the right, and the Roman law was violated, for the quibble that he shed not a drop of blood has been often shown to be a mere trick, as the blood belongs to the flesh, and it is just as when a man buys a field he buys every thing thereto belonging, trees, plants, rocks, whatever there may be. But however admirable Shylock's fervent plea for his people may be, however ardent his words



in the former parts of the play, in his bitter revenge he ceases to be representatively Jewish; "sufferance was the badge of all his tribe," they prayed for respite and for peace. It is not necessary to reiterate or multiply quotations from Jewish writers bidding their co-religionists entertain kindly feelings toward non-Jews, which would make impossible any such transaction as that of the pound of flesh. There were even times when in particularly favorable intervals in Spain and Portugal, in France and Turkey, the Jews rose to the highest power, when it had been possible for them to take sanguinary vengeance on their former oppressors and persecutors, but we do not hear that feelings of revenge took them to any such lengths. The cruelty was all on the other side. Shylock states the case strongly. Through him Shakespeare read a wonderful lesson to his contemporaries; it is their persecution that has brought the Jew low. "The villainy you teach," Shylock speaks of. The intolerance is strongly brought out. The Jews were insulted in every thing they held dear, chiefly their religion. They had all the strongest provocations for entertaining feelings of revenge, and the play shows that had they followed examples set before them such would have been their desire when opportunity was granted them. Wise teachers counseled forbearance. Suffering was looked upon as resultant from sin. God, in

his own time, would bring salvation and redemption to his people. That was Jewish thought. They took it not into their own hands. Often may they have cried in their anguish, "How long, O God, how long?" But they firmly believed in the statement of the Biblical writer, "Vengeance is mine, saith God." In accordance with this thought the vengeance of Shylock, as Jewish, is an impossibility. It should never be regarded as typical.

When Shylock, at the end of his trial, says, in answer to the question of the Duke, whether to retain half his fortune he will turn Christian, "I am content," the character, as Jewish, is again not consistently carried out. What, after he has been so outraged and insulted on account of his religion, after he has cursed and renounced his daughter for marrying a Christian, he, to save his property, likewise turn Christian! What, this Jewish! In those days, when old and young, men and women, youths and maidens, sacrificed their lives rather than change their religion! Were Shylock, as representative of Jewish thought, fervently attached to his religion as we must imagine the Jews to have been, valuing it even more than life, it had been unnatural to have used the words "I am content." As a humane man, and a great mind that could rise above passion and prejudice, Shakespeare speaks a mighty word, that sounds

all the stronger because of its singularity; but into the true thoughts and feelings of the Jew, he could not enter, the opportunity was not his.

In regard to that other disagreeable trait with which the Jew is burdened, usury and avarice, which, strong as it is, is made even subservient to his bitter revenge, for he refuses a great sum when offered him in satisfaction of his claim, I need no more than refer to the many statements of contemporary writers quoted in the chapter on the "Jew of Malta." These show the prevalence of this practice among all classes, Christian and Jewish. It was a curse to which all were addicted, one of the many canker-worms which were gnawing at and sapping the strength of society. It is the fashion, from ignorance, to consider it only Jewish; we will let the case rest on the testimony of those living witnesses, who inform us otherwise.

In the ardor for his religion which Shylock displays in the earlier portions of the play, in his strong statements of the wrongs done his people, in his close intimacy with his Jewish friends, as suggested by the dialogue with Tubal, in his intense love for his daughter, in his disappointment, rage and anger at her having married one of the oppressing class, Shylock is Jewish. There are natures, too, among the Jews, as among all other classes, with that intense hatred and desire for vengeance which stop at naught, not



even blood, but, as one of such, he is not representatively Jewish.

Shylock stands as a grand creation of a master mind, essentially tragic, intense in his every word and action, a picture of what the best-intentioned and highest mind, wishing to do some justice to the Jews, and to relieve the black and terrible picture presented by an earlier play, conceived to be true. In its subtler and finer portions, it was not comprehended by the many, and by its *denouement*, aroused all the passions which it wished to allay.

“Neither Christianity nor Judaism is to blame, or to be commended for Antonio or Shylock.” We must look upon them as individuals, without regard to religion. In any other case that had been understood. With the Jew it was not, for prejudice and hatred were too strong. The time has come when the production of the play no longer arouses these passions. It is studied and witnessed like any other of Shakespeare’s plays. The evil it has done is past, for the spirit which interpreted it for evil, exists no longer. Only with the narrowest minds does the idea still hold that Shylock is such because he is a Jew; the happy thought is spreading that a man’s religion is not to be made responsible for his faults. The encomiums passed upon many a confessor of that same religion, to whose detriment Shylock has always been pointed out as the true picture and embodiment, offer suffi-

cient reason to believe that the spirit of the age would favorably receive a play with a Jew possessing all the noble qualities with which Shakespeare invested him who is considered by many the prince of gentlemen—Antonio, "The Merchant of Venice."

## IV. CUMBERLAND'S "THE JEW."

The latter half of the eighteenth century was pervaded by a spirit of freedom and humanity, which appeared in all the provinces of thought and of action; in thought, Kant opened up a new channel; in action, the American and French revolutions gave ample evidence that a new state of things had arisen, that the regime of the middle ages was at an end, and mankind had entered upon an entirely different course. Among those who still had most to suffer from the influence of medieval times were the Jews, but even for them light was breaking. In Germany, the new spirit had become embodied in Lessing's two dramas, wherein he speaks a powerful word, as only he could speak it, for those whose disinterested protectors had been so few, and in Dohm's noble work, which pleads for a full emancipation of the Jews, an enduring monument, attesting a liberality of thought and sentiment, rare even then. In France, Mirabeau's "Memoir of Mendelssohn," the writings of the Abbe Gregoire, and others, gave proof of the same. In England, the position of the Jews was that of aliens. Some efforts had been made toward an amelioration of their lot and an emancipation from their civil disabilities.



In truth, a bill to that effect had been passed in Parliament in 1753, but on the petition of the city of London and other towns, it was repealed in the following year. Their residence in the country was one of sufferance. True, a few noble voices had been raised in their interest, but the feelings of the masses had not much changed from what they had been in the days of persecution.

In literature, nothing had been published by any writer of note in their behalf. The Jew of Malta and Shylock, interpreted in the worst light, still stood in literature as representative characters. Perhaps it was that, at the end of the eighteenth century, the spirit of Lessing and of Mirabeau was wafted across the channel, for at this time a play was produced with a Jew as the principal character, who, in nobility, unselfishness, and benevolence, can stand alongside of Lessing's Nathan, though the English play does not evince the transcendent qualities of mind and thought as does the German, "The Jew," a play by Richard Cumberland, was written in 1794. It is generally conceded to be one of the finest efforts of this voluminous writer. We can not but admire the freedom and breadth of thought which could discern in one of a usually despised race the noble traits which are ascribed to the Jew, Sheva. Cumberland wrote his memoirs, and from them let me quote several expressions that do him great

honor. He had written, some time before, a Spanish story, in which he introduced a noble character, Abraham Abrahams. Of this he says: "I wrote it upon principle, thinking it high time that something should be done for a persecuted race. I seconded my appeal to the charity of mankind by the character of Sheva, which I copied from that of Abraham" (*Memoirs*, 304). And in another place, in speaking of the reception of his play, he says: "The benevolence of the audience assisted me in rescuing a forlorn and persecuted character, which, till then, had only been brought upon the stage for the unmanly purpose of being made a spectacle of contempt and a butt for ridicule. In the success of this comedy, I felt, of course, a greater gratification than I had ever felt before on a like occasion." (*Ibid.* 340.)

Times were changing. The new spirit was abroad. The personation of kindness and benevolence was offered in a Jew, of hardness and meanness in a Christian, and yet the drama was favorably received. Whatever may have been thought of the impossibility of the existence of such a character among the Jews, still the very fact of its being portrayed, evidences a better and more tolerant spirit. In an earlier day it would not have been possible. A gradual change in public opinion was taking place. The time was ripe. Patience, only patience! A few years more, and the deeply wronged

children of Israel would take their stand according to their merits, not held down by prejudice. The stage is one of the pulses of the popular life. The favor evinced to a play attributing the noblest qualities to the Jew was a good sign. The mind of the people was being prepared. England, then aristocratic England, clinging with all its strength to national traditions, was wheeling about and falling into line; one of its traditions was the inferiority of the Jew. Late was England in granting full emancipation, but there all things work slowly. The people must be educated by agitation. When the necessity of a reform has dawned upon the popular mind, as in no other country, it takes strong hold, never to be revoked; so was it with the emancipation of the Jews. A few greater and nobler minds agitated for years this question, gaining always more adherents, until it became the sense of the country. We might call them the vanguard who led the way that the great army of the people later followed. Among this vanguard, we may surely regard the author of this play, whose sentiments have just been expressed.

Ere proceeding to a discussion of the play, it will, perhaps, be well to give a short abstract thereof, for it is not now very well known. It belongs to the class of plays then popular, but is not to be mentioned among the great dramatic classics of the language.

An English baronet, Sir Stephen Bertram,



close-fisted and miserly, forbids his son Frederick to marry a Miss Ratcliffe, whose only crime lies in her poverty, but the son has already married the lady of his choice. In Sir Stephen's office is employed the lady's brother, Charles Ratcliffe. The Ratcliffe family, consisting of a widowed mother, the son, and daughter, had been in affluent circumstances, but reverses set in. Charles Ratcliffe is dismissed from the employ of Sir Stephen, when the Baronet hears of his son's infatuation with the sister. The good spirit of the play is the Jew Sheva. He is generally looked upon as a miser; his occupation is that of the conventional Jew of the stage, a money-lender. He lives sparingly, and stints himself that he may have the more to give to others. He becomes specially interested in Charles Ratcliffe and his family, because the young man had rescued him from indignities and injuries when a crowd had set upon the Jew, and this interest deepens far when he learns that Ratcliffe is the son of the man who, in earlier years, had saved him from the auto-da-fe in Spain. This Sheva gives utterance to the noblest sentiments. His life is devoted to the purpose of doing good secretly. His charity is unostentatious, he even disclaims all knowledge of the good he does; he carries out the old Talmudic maxim to give to the poor in such a manner that they shall not be put to shame.

Of mean exterior, this noble soul, whose

light illuminates so many a dark and cheerless life, is content to be misapprehended. He is one of those heroes of humanity, who do their work well, because they must, seeking no other applause than that of an approving conscience. This man the world misjudges, being guided by outward appearances, as he himself says: "The world knows no great deal of me. I live sparingly and labor hard; therefore, I am called a miser—I can not help it—an uncharitable dog, I must endure it; a blood-sucker, an extortioner, a Shylock—hard names, but what can a poor Jew say in return if a Christian abuses him? We have no abiding place on earth, no country, no home; every body rails at us, every body flouts us, every body points us out for their very game and mockery." That is past. The Jew has his home and his country in the free lands upon which the spirit of liberty has breathed.

By stating his lonely and solitary condition thus strongly, the philanthropy of Sheva stands forth the more vividly—a man without a country, yet attached to the land wherein he dwells; a man misunderstood and reviled, yet kindly disposed toward the helpless, upon whose heads he will not visit the sins of his detractors. See what a difference between this conception and that of Shylock. As remarkable an advance as Shylock showed over Barabbas, a still greater and more notable advance is Sheva over Shy-

lock. Shylock is reviled, abused, mocked, scorned, and he harbors plans of revenge. Sheva is reviled, abused, mocked, scorned, and he is not deterred from entertaining and fulfilling plans of benevolence. A different spirit was working. The Jew was coming to be better understood. Kindlier sentiments were entertained toward him. One of the chief elements of the Jewish character, that of charity, was grasped by the author of this play and elaborated. Shylock is the embodiment of the fierce spirit of revenge, Sheva of the gentle spirit of benevolence. But, being misunderstood and wrongly placed, he states the case strongly. The world knows him not. Full emancipation has come, and we still ask, Does not the world judge the Jew harshly even now? Does not the world judge without knowledge? The spirit of intolerance in theory exists no longer, in practice it does. We know that the feelings of fifteen centuries, handed down from generation to generation, do not die out so quickly; prejudice still lurks. It breaks forth every once in a while, to the shame of the time and its people. True, it can no longer be said with Sheva, "they are railed at, flouted, mocked publicly," but the spirit of the great and free minds, the Lessings and the Mirabeaus, the Washingtons and the Jeffersons, the Macaulays and the Gladstones, must become much more prevailing, ere it can truly be said that not even in thought do medi-



eval prejudices exist. Knowledge, not blinded by passion or envy, can alone overcome them—recognition of the true status of the Jew, neither undervaluing nor overestimating him. That is all that is asked for—to judge him as other men are judged, to feel that he is a man of and among men.

Sheva is approached by Frederick Bertram, who asks that he lend him three hundred pounds, for he can obtain naught from his father. Sheva promises to lend him this sum. When left alone he seems to lament his promise, but stops short and soliloquizes thus:

"But soft, a word, friend Sheva! Art thou not rich? Monstrous rich? Abominably rich? And yet thou livest on a crust! Be it so; thou dost stint thine appetites to pamper thine affections; thou dost make thyself to live in poverty that the poor may live in plenty."

Upon his performing some kind act, Charles says to him in surprise: "Thou hast affections, feelings, charities." Sheva gives an answer reminding of Terrence's famous phrase, "I am a man, nothing that is human is indifferent to me." Sheva's reply is, "I am a man, sir; call me how you please." And he is answered, "I'll call you Christian then, and this proud merchant Jew;" whereupon he finely says, "I shall not thank you for that compliment."

A magnificent reply and rebuke truly. It seems that it was and still is the custom to call

every thing good Christian ; a good life is designated a Christian life ; a good deed, a Christian deed ; a good man, a Christian man. Even when it is wished to compliment Jews highly, it is said that they show Christian charity, or speak Christian words.

While I do not for a moment controvert the claims of Christianity to goodness when it is carried out in the true spirit, as little as I would contradict the purity of any upright system of life and of morals, still we, who are in religion Jews, say with Sheva, in his finely turned phrase, in good works, "We will not thank you to call us Christians," for our good deeds have a basis many centuries older than Christianity, a basis in the words of our writings. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," "Thou shalt open wide thy hand to the poor and needy;" in the phrases, "Happy is he that careth for the poor," "He that giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord," and in many sentences of similar import scattered through the Jewish writings. Good deeds are not peculiarly Christian, nor Jewish, nor Mohammedan, nor Buddhistic, they are of man, and when Sheva says: "I am a man, call me how you please," his thought is broad and all comprehensive. His words embody the spirit of humanity, that true non-sectarian spirit which is by no means universal, nor even understood—that can

look upon God, not as the Christian's God, nor the Jew's God, but humanity's God.

This noble heart, beating beneath an ignoble exterior, Ratcliffe learns to appreciate; the heart which Sheva has shown to no man, and which he does not carry in his hand. When he is asked why he can spare so little to himself, being so charitable to others, he replies that it is his purpose to do all the possible good while he lives, and repay the debt of gratitude when he dies. The true spirit of charity rules this man, for when he gives Frederick the three hundred pounds, to make the acceptance easy, he causes it to appear that a favor is done him by Frederick's taking the money. "I pray you take them. Why will you be so hard with a poor Jew as to refuse him a good bargain, when you know he loves to lay his money out to profit and advantage?" The profit and advantage to which he laid out his money was charity, and the interest he reaped on the principal was the good it brought to others. Could it be more beautifully put; making it appear a favor to him that the other should take his money?

Sir Stephen is told that Sheva is secretly very charitable. He can not believe it. Sheva is accused and maligned by Sir Stephen for giving his son money, is called a villain for upholding the son against the father. In answer, one of those noble sentiments is again uttered: "I do uphold the son, but not against the father. It is



not natural to suppose the father and the oppressor one and the same person. I did see your son struck down to the ground with sorrow, cut to the heart. I did not stop to ask whose hand had laid him low; I gave him mine and raised him up." Sir Stephen, in amazement says: "You, you talk of charity?" And he is answered: "I do not talk of it, I feel it." Deeds, not words, this Jew is powerful in.

When he learns that money alone is necessary to heal the breach, satisfy Sir Stephen, and make all happy, he deposits ten thousand pounds in the name of Ratcliffe's sister, the wife of Frederick. The paper by which this sum was made over is shown to Sir Stephen, the father. He is thunderstruck, he can not conceive that a Jew can even lend a small sum without the desire of doubling. Upon his expressing such thoughts, Sheva answers in one of the finest passages of the play:

"What has Sheva done to be called a villain? I am a Jew; what then? Is that a reason none of my tribe should have a sense of pity? You have no great deal of pity yourself, but I do know many noble British merchants that do abound in pity, therefore, I do not abuse your tribe." Here is expressed the same thought we have met with before, and whose importance seems to be widely and generally recognized. Every writer, Christian and Jewish, who has spoken for the Jews has reiterated it; as we

have met it before, so shall we meet it again. Does prejudice still exist? We can trace it to this as one of the leading causes. One is made responsible for all, and all for one. If one Jew commits a wrong, all are blamed; if one hundred Jews do good, only the hundred individuals receive credit therefor. What holds good in the one case, must hold good in the other. The evil as well as the good in individuals may not be set to the account of communities, among whom the individual is not even known. Paul and Iscariot were both Jews, but many a pious Christian who still execrates the nation from whom the betrayer of his master sprung, seems to forget altogether that of the same nation, Paul, the real founder of their religion, was one. The evil, be it ever so small, is remembered; the good, be it ever so great, is forgotten. If Jews there are, who reach not the standard of righteousness, it is not as Jews that they are such. As little do we lay to the blame of Christianity all the villainy of church members, Sunday-school superintendents and teachers, who in great numbers seek refuge in the land of safety beyond the border. Let the reproach be cast where it belongs. The teachings of religion pure, can produce but good; the perversity of man, acting in contrariety to those teachings, produces the evil. No community at large can be responsible for the acts of every individual.

Now, that his son's wife has 10,000 pounds,

Sir Stephen is ready to forgive and clasp both to his heart. And when all praise Sheva's munificence, he says: "Do not talk of my bounty, I do never give away for bounty's sake. If pity wrings my heart whether I will or not, then do I give. How can I help it?"

It is only now, after he has done all this kindness, that he learns that his early preserver was Ratcliffe's father. "I did always think when I did heap up my moneys with such pain and labor, that I would find a use for them at last." The 10,000 pounds he has made over to Ratcliffe's sister without her knowledge, and when Sir Stephen asks her about the money, she disclaims knowing any thing about it, and the merchant concludes that he has been deceived, but later he learns better, when Ratcliffe brings Sheva forward with the words: "This is the man . . . the widow's friend, the orphan's father, the poor man's protector, the universal philanthropist." "Hush, hush," pleads Sheva. "You make me hide my face. Enough, enough. I pray you spare me. I am not used to hear the voice of praise, and it oppresses me." And the last words of this "universal philanthropist," after he has declared his intention of making Ratcliffe his heir, are:

"I do not bury it (his money) in a synagogue, or any other pile. I do not waste it upon vanity or public works. I leave it to a charitable heir, and build my hospital in the human heart."



This is the noble character drawn by an English writer of the past century ; all honor to him that he could, in conception, anticipate the complete vindication of the Jew in that country during the past few decades. We can almost forgive the heinousness of Barabbas when we contrast therewith the nobility of Sheva. Without one living blood relative, upon whom to lavish affection, or from whom to receive marks of love, his large nature goes far beyond the narrow limits of relationship, of religion, of tribe, and his heart beats for humanity. To look him in the face is to see nothing of his heart. He is covered with contumely and insult, yet he grows not bitter, nor makes mankind responsible for individual doings.

He is a Jew at heart ; has learned well the lessons of his religion—"he is merciful to all mankind;" he harbors no ill-will ; "he can forgive his enemy, much more his friend;" he forgets no deed of kindness, but the feeling of gratitude, deep-seated in his heart, makes him happy when he can aid the family of his benefactor. He is maligned by the proud and hard merchant, but yet he aids the son when in need. He revenges himself for the harsh language used and the cruel treatment to which he is subjected by doing good. A pure, unselfish spirit, great, truly great, but yet content to be so humble. The world shall never know that so bright a spirit dwelt upon it, and that, too, in-

cased within the then considered despicable body of an unbelieving Jew; for he sighs not for monuments that shall emblazon his name, but he "builds his hospital in the human heart." A powerful lesson the author of this play taught; powerful indeed in his day, and none the less so in ours. Aye, we may say, he spoke a word wonderful at that time, and which the education of a century has not succeeded in instilling into the masses; and that powerful lesson is, that a man's creed does not condemn him. To the Christian of his time he said, a Jew can be noble as well as a Christian.

"Belief is not the criterion of virtue, for if it were such, and that belief exclusively Christian, what a small section of philanthropists would there be to mitigate the sorrows of this harsh world, even if every confessor were a Christian."

It may be argued that this character is overdrawn, that as Barabbas is impossible in wickedness, so is Sheva impossible in goodness. That such characters are rare, exceedingly rare, we must grant; but they are not impossibilities. Suppose, however, for argument's sake, that as here portrayed, the character is exaggerated; that even considering the goodness of heart possible, the liberality of spirit shown which considers man as man without the attributes of any special character of belief or religion, is unthinkable in a Jew of that day, it was a necessity for the author to bring forward such a fig-

ure of light. The contrast to the conventional presentation must be great, to leave the proper effect. The popular mind requires strong light to be thrown upon it to be impressed. So beautiful a character standing forth from the dark back-ground formed by the hardness of the Christian merchant, could not fail to have a salutary effect. Marlowe had inflamed the populace by his villain Jew; Cumberland interested it by his Jew benevolent. With a little pruning down, the character can stand as the portrayal of a noble, large-souled man, which the Jew Sheva aims to be. Narrow the Jew is not any longer. He is cosmopolitan, the universal citizen. His religion is broad, one God, and one humanity. His sympathies are broad as his religion. He is, to repeat the words of Sheva, "A man, call him how you will."



## V. SCOTT'S "IVANHOE."

Of all the works of fiction wherein a Jew is made to play a prominent rôle, there is none, with the exception of Shakespeare's play, that has been as widely read as the romantic tale of Sir Walter Scott. Isaac of York is known to hundreds who have never read a line of Jewish history, and Rebecca has excited admiration and sympathy among thousands to whom such a portrayal of a Jewess must have appeared ideal and highly colored, indeed, permissible in fiction, but impossible in fact.

That the writer was in sympathy with his subject is evident. There are passages which, for truthful presentation and for fervency, could not have been excelled by a son of Israel wishing to enlist interest in the past sufferings of his people. I will not speak of the charm of the novel nor of its merit as a work of art; what concerns us are the Jewish passages, in how far are they true, in how far overdrawn, in how far deficient. It was not only the interest which romance threw over the subject that could have induced the great Scottish writer to portray these characters. There can be no doubt but that sympathy with an oppressed people who, in his own land in that late year wherein he

lived, still suffered under civil disabilities, had much to do with the production of the work, for his was a peculiarly generous nature, and throughout his writings, the sympathies of the reader are always enlisted on the side of the weaker party. That the tale has some foundation of this kind, both in sympathy and in fact, we learn from an authentic notice which has been left us of the reason why Scott wrote a novel wherein Jews played such important rôles. A Mrs. Skene, whose husband was an intimate friend of the poet-novelist, gives the following as the cause of the introduction of Isaac and Rebecca into the tale: "Mr. Skene sitting by his (Scott's) bedside, and trying to amuse him as well as he could in the intervals of pain, happened to get on the subject of the Jews, as he had observed them when he spent some time in Germany in his youth. Their situation had naturally made a strong impression, for in those days they retained their dress and manners entire, and were treated with considerable austerity by their Christian neighbors, being still locked up at night in their own quarter by great gates, and Mr. Skene, partly in seriousness and partly from the mere wish to turn his mind at that moment upon something that might occupy and divert it, suggested that a group of Jews would be an interesting feature if he could bring them into his next novel. Upon the appearance of *Ivanhoe*, he reminded

Mr. Skene of the conversation, and said you will find the book owes not a little to your German reminiscences." (Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, pp. 77-78.)

By taking so early a period as the time of the action, Scott not only entered into his own peculiar province, the description of the days of romance and chivalry, but by showing in this popular form the origins of some of the wrongs of the Jews, how they were compelled, well nigh driven, to become what they were, how the fault lay with their oppressors, he could better enlist the sympathy of the thinking classes than by merely offering a picture of the Jews as they were in his day. The time of action is toward the end of the twelfth century, when, in the absence and captivity of Richard the Lion-hearted, his brother John was meditating a seizure of the throne. The position of the Jews in England at this time was much like that of their brethren in Central Europe. They had been in the country a long time, had acquired wealth, were used by royalty and nobility as sponges to be pressed dry whenever money was needed. The story of the prince, who, to extort money from a Jew unwilling to be thus robbed, had tooth after tooth extracted from the mouth of the unhappy victim until he consented to the extortion, is suggestive of the indignities to which these people were subjected. There was a special tax which they were compelled to pay, but with all that they throve, for

Abraham Ibn Ezra, the renowned Spanish scholar, in his wanderings through Europe, visited also London a short time before the period whereof we speak, and he found there a community, prosperous as the Jews could then well be, for the wholesale persecutions and expulsions which became prevalent during the following centuries had not yet been inaugurated. But the little tranquillity they had enjoyed was not for long. They had no home: "except, perhaps, the flying fish, there was no race on earth, in the air, or in the waters, who were the objects of such unremitting, general, relentless persecution as the Jews of this period. Upon the slightest and most unreasonable pretenses, as well as upon accusations the most absurd and groundless, their persons and property were exposed to every whim of popular fury." These few words show that in the author of this work we have one who knew whereof he spoke. He well understood the position of the devoted people. I need not here expatiate upon all the cruelties to which they were subjected; how, by a systematic course, and by frequent decrees the popular hatred toward them was fostered; how it was forbidden Christians to associate with them, as though they had been accursed; how none were permitted to eat or drink with them; how Christians were prohibited to employ Jewish physicians; how they dared not appear on the streets during Holy Week, for fear of bodily violence; how



they were compelled to submit to all indignities imaginable, were set upon by mobs, robbed, plundered, murdered. All that has often been told of the time whereof we treat. The representative of such treatment in our tale is a rich Jew of York, who is portrayed, as in former instances in the case of Jewish characters, as a usurer. Here Scott also seems to indorse the old thought that the Jews were the only ones engaged in these shameful transactions. To again show the injustice of this charge, an injustice which can not be too often or too strongly insisted upon, for the idea is so general and widespread, it will be apposite to quote the words of an English historian, who says: "The several statutes made to prevent usury after the Jews had been expelled from the kingdom prove it to be a crime in no way peculiar to them." Scott is said to have obtained the outlines for the character of Isaac from the stray hints scattered here and there in the chronicles of Matthew Paris and other early writers about a wealthy Jew, Aaron of Lincoln, who lived in the time of Henry II.

The appearance of Isaac, on his introduction into the house of Cedric the Saxon, is graphically described. This we can leave to the vividness of the imagination. In one important feature of the dress, however, there is an error, and that is when we are told that he wore a high, square, yellow cap of a peculiar fashion, assigned

to his nation to distinguish them from the Christian. Scott, usually so exact in his historical notices, is here at fault. It may not be known to the present generation that formerly the Jews were compelled to wear a distinguishing mark, consisting usually of a piece of yellow cloth on the garment, and a peculiarly shaped hat, that there might be no difficulty in designating them. It marked them as targets to be aimed at. This terrible indignity was one of the most shameful to which they have ever been subjected. It was received with a wail of bitterness and of anguish from one end of Europe to the other. Against its enforcement the Jews struggled in vain with might and main, but at the time of which Scott wrote, it had not yet been instituted. It was the infernal device of Innocent III., the bitter opponent of any thing at all smacking of heresy, the instigator of the crusades against the Albigenses, the uncompromising enemy of the Jews. It was first promulgated by him at the Fourth Lateran Council, in 1215, for all Christendom; was then from time to time passed in the separate ecclesiastical councils held in different countries; in England, at the Council of Oxford, in the year 1222. So we may imagine Isaac as yet exempt from wearing the degrading badge. No need to enter into a detailed criticism of the character of Isaac: he possesses but little strength or power; "he is but a milder Shylock, and by no means more natural

than his original." It is not he that enlists sympathy; it is the occasional descriptions and explanations of the lot of the Jews. He is naught but the miser, pure and simple, trembling for his wealth; lying, deceiving, so as not to part with his hoard; scarcely once, in all his varied exclamations, does he rise above himself; scarcely once does he speak of the sufferings of his people; scarcely once does he resent the indignities placed upon him because he is a Jew—it is only as the guardian of his treasures that he is portrayed.

In one notable point I find that Scott, in this character, has shown keen observation, and that is in the manner in which Isaac is made to speak, in short, quick, unconnected sentences. While the Jews dwelt together and were Jewish in thought as in all else, I think we can well say that a characteristic of their thought was its quickness. They thought rapidly, and naturally this would appear in their speech; the thoughts crowded so that often before one sentence was concluded another was begun. To Isaac is ascribed this characteristic, and it is justly given. Before leaving the character, let me refer somewhat at length to the one instance in which the man rises above the miser, in which he evinces pure Jewish feeling. However base, however dark, however avaricious the Jewish characters may be drawn, still all authors recognize one beautiful feature in their lives. Barabbas, Shy-



lock, Isaac, all love their daughters with all the affection of which they were capable. The Jewish home-life, a result, and the only good result of the evils of their existence has been lauded and extolled by all; shut off from every thing else, excluded from all association with the external world, the only place that the kindly feelings could take root and flourish was among themselves, in their homes. Here they sought the warmth of affection which was elsewhere denied them, and in the family circle found their only joy. Of this, Isaac's feelings for his daughter are exemplificatory. Scott has well portrayed this love for, this pride in his daughter. This is his one redeeming feature; here he rises above himself. The heart of the father conquers. He becomes at this time admirable. Love is stronger than avarice. When he learns that his child is in danger, even to him money is naught; he throws off the cringing, hypocritical guise, and appears in all the strong indignation, all the deep anguish of natural feeling of a father for his child threatened with harm: "Take all that you have asked, Sir Knight, take ten times more—reduce me to ruin and beggary if thou wilt—nay, pierce me with thy poinard, broil me on that furnace, spare my daughter, deliver her in safety and honor. As thou art born of woman, save the honor of a helpless maiden—she is the image of my deceased Rachael—she is the last of six pledges of



her love. Will you deprive a widowed husband of his sole remaining comfort? Will you reduce the father to the wish that his only living child were laid beside her dead mother in the tomb of our fathers?" In this alone does Isaac evince noble traits. In all else he is not suggestive of better things. It is as if the author had said, this is an aspect of character made possible by the circumstance of persecution and degradation. Look now upon the ideal side of the Jewish character—and he holds up the picture of Rebecca. Where Isaac utters not one word on the religion, Rebecca is the Jewess to the core. Isaac is the result of the intolerance of centuries, Rebecca is as the fair rose of the purity of Judaism untainted and unwithered, and who will say that the aroma is not refreshing and pure? Rebecca, "the sweetest character in the whole range of fiction," as Thackeray puts it, is a beautiful creation, the grace and interest of the whole story; a mixture of womanly sweetness and heroic strength, of maidenly modesty and conscious worth. With a knowledge of her unfortunate condition, because she is a daughter of Israel, her attitude toward those whom a religion triumphant has set above her is one of "proud humility, as though she knew in her mind that she is entitled to hold a higher rank from her merit." An enthusiastic worshipper of her God, she has in her the stuff of a martyr. As she is drawn she is well nigh

perfect, impressing all with whom she comes into contact, alike, so that even the dull swineherd, upon leaving her house, in spite of his ignorant prejudice is forced to exclaim: "This is no Jewess, but an angel from heaven."

Rebecca stands forth prominently in the tale, for beauty and perfection almost on a par with Shakespeare's women. Of her beauty and loveliness, which on her appearance at the tournament, is said not to have yielded to the most beautiful of the maidens who surrounded her, I will not speak. All the extravagant expressions of praise and admiration which are bestowed on her by prince and noble are pleasing, but we hurry on to discover of what mettle this paragon of loveliness is made. She is, in the first place, intensely Jewish. The degradation and misery, the oppression and persecution, the thefts and extortions to which her people must submit are borne with resignation. These are but a "sacrifice which heaven exacted to save our lives," and she reminds her father, who so bitterly laments the robberies which the nobles indulge in with impunity at his expense, that the God of their fathers has since blessed his store and gettings. Unfortunate as she knows the Jews are, she is not one to merely lament. In her presence her father sinks into insignificance, although her attitude toward him is always of profound respect and concern. She utters the truly philosophical thought: "We are like the herb which flour-

isheth most when it is most trampled on." To whatever it was owing it is a profound and wondrous fact—a miracle, indeed—that any of the Jews remained, especially during those terrible days of the crusades, when the mobs were exhorted to root out the heretics at home, ere they marched against them in the East, and Jewish blood flowed in streams, and massacres were of well-nigh daily occurrence. For this wondrous proof of God's protection, a pious heart like that of Rebecca was truly grateful. She could look beyond present afflictions and see the finger of Providence guiding the course of her people. The trust in God forsook her not in the most trying times, even as in the real trials and afflictions of the bitter and troubled existence of the Jews of those days, it forsook not her sisters, many of whom met death rather than dishonor; many of whom, maiden and wife, young women and old, ascended the burning pyre, or thrust the cold steel into their bosoms, or cast themselves into the flowing streams, when these were the only alternatives left them to forsaking the religion of their fathers. The history of the women of Israel of those days is a wondrous chronicle—that history which details acts heroic and self-sacrificing, acts of the martyr. In many instances were they the preservers of deep and holy religious fervor. Rebecca's strength and resignation are



not overdrawn; they were equaled by the fair daughters and pious mothers of scattered Israel.

Rebecca is first brought into prominent connection with the other personages of the tale when she orders the wounded Ivanhoe, who has been so kind to her father, to be removed from the lists to her house, attends to his wounds and heals him. She is one of the wise and learned. Her charms are heightened by the powers of a noble mind. To many, the whole description of Rebecca, particularly this appertaining to her influence and her learning, without doubt, appears to be much exaggerated, and but the generous fancy of a poet's mind; for it has been so often and so repeatedly asserted that among the Jews woman held a minor position but little above that of a slave, that we may well devote a little space to show that a woman of attainments and position such as are attributed to Rebecca, was not only a possibility, but an actuality among the Jews. That she was denied certain legal and ceremonial rights which were granted only to man, did not prevent her from acquiring a most beneficial influence in the home, and becoming the guiding spirit of much that was best and purest. It did not hinder her from cultivating her mind and exercising her powers of thought.

I will not quote the hundred and one maxims and sayings which can be culled from Jewish writings, ancient and mediæval, designating the high opinion held of her worth, nor point to

the many figures which stand forth so prominently from the pages of the Bible, and with which all are familiar. I will not speak of the learned women that the Talmud mentions, such as Beruriah and Emma Shalom, but will only point out that in the darkest days, when the Jews were most oppressed, during these times wherein our tale runs and later, the Jewish women in learning and influence held a lofty position. There are mentioned as learned and highly cultivated minds in France, Belletta in the eleventh, Hanna in the twelfth century ; in France likewise dwelt the family of Rashi, the great commentator—he had no sons, only daughters ; all were learned (one of them we know by the name of Bellejeune), as were also his two granddaughters, Miriam and Anna. Miriam Shapira delivered lectures at a college which many students attended. Deborah Ascarelli and Sarah Copia Sullam were poetesses of no mean merit, and the name of Donna Garcia Mendes need only be mentioned to show that woman was also consulted in external affairs, and was a patron of learning, as the praises sung of her by those who knew her, amply testify. A Rebecca in mind was then a possibility ; there was nothing in the prejudices of her people, as has been falsely represented, to prevent this. Her skill in medicine comes to Ivanhoe in good stead. But here, in her relation to Ivanhoe, we find an incongruity with the Jewish character. Leaving

aside now all the romantic incidents, the possibility of her having appeared at the tournament, as is described, or the removal of Ivanhoe, the wounded knight, to her home, or of the likelihood of a Jewish maiden, no matter what her skill or gratitude, attending a Christian knight; granting even that, under very extraordinary circumstances, such things might be, yet it is not at all probable that Rebecca, the fervent Jewess, so deeply conscious of the wrongs of her people, knowing so well the sentiments entertained toward her own by even the best of Christians, fully aware that they were looked upon as damned, as unfit to be associated with—aye, it is impossible that Rebecca, as such a one, could have entertained even the slightest tender feeling for Ivanhoe beyond that of sympathy for his sufferings. He is correctly pictured as turning away and growing very cold and distant the instant he learns she is a Jewess; she is, indeed, represented as struggling against the feeling of love that moved her toward the knight: "I will tear this folly from my heart, though every fiber bleeds as I rend it away." But such a feeling could not even have arisen. With Jessica, light and frivolous, it was possible; with Rebecca, earnest, deep feeling, so Jewish in every thought, never under any circumstances. The novelist felt this at least, in so far that the two are not united, as he says in his preface: "The prejudices of the age rendered such a union almost



impossible." But had he truly portrayed Jewish feeling of that time, not even by a syllable would he have indicated that any passion had sprung up, just as little as it was in the case of *Ivanhoe*. Prejudice on the one side, bitter wrong on the other, on the part of sincere Christian and Jew, should have taught the absurdity of the entertainment of such a notion. The abyss that separated them was too broad for them ever to clasp hands across it. The conference, however, between *Ivanhoe* and Rebecca, while she acts as his physician, is an instructive one. The author reverts to the fact that the Jews were skilled in the science of medicine—which is very true, as many great physicians of those days were Jews or Arabs. In spite of the fact that the Church, in many decrees, forbade the faithful to employ Jewish physicians, yet there was many a Christian who preferred to risk the salvation of his soul by intrusting his body to the skill of the medical science of the Jews, than to lose his life by relying upon the efficacy of relics and ghostly signs made by monks. After healing *Ivanhoe*, the only reward she asks is that he shall "believe henceforth, that a Jew may do good service to a Christian without desiring other guerdon than the blessing of the great Father who made both Jew and Gentile."

I need not further detail the plot of the novel; how Rebecca, in the party of Cedric, the Saxon,



was captured and given over to the Knight Templar; the vivid description of the storming of the castle; the intensely dramatic scenes between her and Bois Guilbert; her refusal to listen to him, preferring death to union with him; the trial, at which she was accused of being a sorceress, that by her arts she had seduced the Templar; how her knowledge of medicine is cited as a proof of her sorcery, for in those dark and ignorant days, every man who possessed knowledge which the populace could not comprehend, was regarded as a wizard; learning was unnatural, and could be inspired only by the powers of the evil. I need not tell of the condemnation, the final result. Many a noble and beautiful word does she speak in her conversation with the Templar: "Thou knowest not the heart of woman; not in thy fiercest battles hast thou displayed more of thy vaunted courage than has been shown by woman when called upon to suffer by affection and duty." The most fervent expression of the author of the position of some of the Jews he puts into the mouth of Rebecca, when, in answer to the taunt that the Jews are degraded, as conversant with ingot and shekel, instead of spear and shield, she bursts forth: "Thou hast spoken the Jew as the persecution of such as thou art has made him. Industry has opened to him the only road to power and influence which oppression has left unbarred. Read the ancient history of

the people of God, and tell me if those by whom Jehovah wrought such marvels among the nations were then a people of misers and usurers. And know, proud knight, we number names among us, to which your boasted northern nobility is as the gourd compared with the cedar. Such were the princes of Judah. And there are those among them now who shame not such high descent, and such shall be the daughter of Isaac, the son of Adoni-Kam." She stood the test. One so thoroughly reliant on God could not but wish well to all, and the last words she speaks are those addressed to *Ivanhoe's* bride: "May he who made both Jew and Christian shower down on you his choicest blessings."

No character has ever received greater encomiums than those passed on Rebecca, and truly no figure nobler in every way has been drawn. It is said that Scott based his presentation on a description given him by Washington Irving, of a Philadelphia Jewess, Rebecca Gratz. This lady Irving had met at the death-bed of his betrothed, and had been much impressed with the gentleness and beauty of her character. Of her Scott drew an ideal portrait.

Divest Rebecca of her romantic surroundings, and she, as herself, stands as a figure of pure and true womanhood; a Jewess in feeling, in sentiment, in religious thought she is; her resignation, bravery, and steadfastness are histori-

cally possible, for there were Jewish maidens sufficient in those days who, as the records report, bore suffering as resignedly, as bravely, as steadfastly. The character is woven in the wreath of poetic fancy; yet the separate attributes ascribed to her are all natural and womanly, and, taken all in all, make such a one as we could conceive the highest type of womanhood to be; her attachment to her father, her care for the poor, her attention to the wounded, her proud defiance of the evil doer, her enthusiasm for Israel's past, her deep piety, her trust in God, combine to produce so noble a woman, that of her we may say:

"From every one,  
The best she hath, and she, of all compounded.  
Outsells them all."



## VI. DICKENS'S "OLIVER TWIST" AND "OUR MUTUAL FRIEND."

It has always appeared strange to me that in many instances, when the great English writers and fictionists had occasion to speak of the Jews, they did so in derogatory terms, and classed them with the lowest elements of society. Can it be that they were wilfully blind, or that they did it only for effect? Surely a community which is represented by the Montefiores, Solomons, Goldsmids, Magnus, Jessels, Cohens and Rothschilds, can not be so universally degraded that, when an especially disagreeable character is desired, he is described in unmistakable terms as one of this body. Carlyle was guilty of this in his *Sartor Resartus*, and in some of his later productions. Thackeray designates as Jews, bailiffs and keepers of debtors' prisons, personages of the lowest stamp, and has distorted Scott's beautiful romance by a silly so-called sequel, in which his hostile feelings plainly appear. A young writer, some fifty years ago, after having achieved phenomenal success in a new kind of literature, "*The Pickwick Papers*," presented to the public as the second production of his genius a work of an entirely different nature, a sensational story,

"*Oliver Twist*." Here and there appeared glimpses of the humor which had marked his earlier work, but, on the whole, the tale was cast in the mold of the horrible, and depended for its strength on the debased characters and the criminal life of which Fagin is the central figure.

It was eighteen years since *Ivanhoe* had appeared, and what a contrast between its Jewish personage and the character in this, the next work of a great English writer, in which a Jew plays a prominent rôle! In the one the charm, in the other the disgrace of the work; in the one the possessor of all human virtues, in the other of all human vices; in the one fair in body and fairer in soul, in the other distorted in body and black in soul; the one a plea for kindness toward a community at that time still unrecognized as worthy of the rights of men and women, the other calculated to re-awaken all the old thoughts, if ever they had died out, of the baseness and wickedness of the Jews.

It is not necessary to give a detailed account of the story of the adventures of *Oliver Twist*, of Bill and Nancy Sykes, of Mr. Bumble and his offices, of Fagin and his precious pupils, the Artful Dodger and Charley Bates; all that interests us here is the character of Fagin, who is continually obtruded upon our notice as "the Jew." Were the miscreant, whenever introduced upon the scene, merely spoken of as Fagin, we would look upon him as an example

of London's criminal class, and there would be nothing further to arrest our special attention. He would be to us nothing more nor less than a wicked wretch, who led youths astray, enjoyed the fruits of others' wrong-doing, whom he instigated; with no redeeming qualities, a coward, a thief, well nigh a murderer. We would consider his punishment deserved, as it is, and that graphic description of his last night alive, as one of the strongest, though at the same time one of the most horrible chapters in the range of fiction. Our whole concern with the novel would be to judge it upon its literary merits, the strength of its characters, the correctness of its situations. It would be as the many others of the productions of the masters of fiction; but for one reason the work is somewhat more than this to us. Our interest does not cease here. We have to do with the Jew.

The author presented this character as a Jew, and hence has laid himself open to the charge of gross wrong and injustice. The fact of Fagin being a Jew does not make him what he is; but when the novel was written such an idea was far from being deemed impossible. The Jew was still an unknown quantity; people thought him *sui generis*; it was not known, according to popular opinion, what he was likely to do.

All ideas formed of the Jews, if any were held at all, were gathered from hostile writings, or were due to prejudice. It was only the few,



the very few, who could rise to the height of the thought of humanity and see in them the man, without regard to the religion which had been taught by churchmen to have outlived its usefulness and to have been clung to with an obstinacy that was reprehensible. But six years before the publication of this novel, in spite of the most strenuous efforts of Robert Grant, Macaulay, and their *confrères* of the Liberal or Whig party, it was found impossible to have a bill granting full emancipation to the Jews passed in Parliament. In the country beyond the cities, into which the Jews had not yet penetrated, we may be sure that the most grotesque opinions concerning them were entertained. A work such as this, which was read every-where and by every body, could not fail, therefore, in deepening the unfavorable impression, for the mass of the people think not deeply; they are swayed by sentiments and prejudices, which, deep-rooted, are long in being eradicated. The influence for evil was, without doubt, incalculable, for the villain was a Jew, and, if one were such, it was concluded that all were.

The world still deemed the Jews capable of the greatest crimes, for it was but three years after this book was written that the terrible Damascus affair took place, in 1840, and there were many in Europe who believed the story that the Jews had murdered the monk, Father Thomas, to use his blood at the Passover Feast (for, in



ignorant communities, the same terrible accusation still finds credence; it is only a few years back that the world was startled by a like proceeding in Hungary, after the falsity of the charge had been proven again and again). Even some European consuls, stationed in the Levant at that time, instead of using their influence to give the unfounded accusations the lie, fanned the popular fury and fanaticism. So, then, when people were still capable of listening to and accepting as true such charges against these unhappy people, every portrayal that set forth even one mentioned as of their number as wicked, could not but weigh them still lower to the ground. Truly, in 1837, when this novel was published, there was not much enlightenment on the subject of Jews and Judaism, and every popular detraction but strengthened the wrong opinion. It is my aim to correct the false impressions concerning the Jews and Jewish history and life, that had been spread by these works. There are dark sides as well as light, and if they have been correctly portrayed I am ever ready and willing to acknowledge them also as true. But Fagin, it can not be my purpose to justify nor to apologize for; except in name, he is no Jew; he is a villainous criminal, that is all. It is unjust to append the appellation Jew to such as Fagin and his like, even if in life there should be those of his vile character who chance to have been born in the Jewish religion.

Strange it is, at best, that Charles Dickens, who, of all fictionists, contributed the most toward reforming social abuses, should, in this one instance, have joined the vulgar cry, and marked his worst character as a Jew. Knowing what we do of his works, we should rather have looked for the opposite. Here was an excellent opportunity for a lashing of false opinions and abuses of society. Here were people who, through no fault of their own, were abused and pressed down, were denied political rights, and could not sit in either house. A call upon the English nation to amend these wrongs would have sounded more consistent with the whole course of this novelist, than this evidence of participation in the popular sentiment. His other criminals are designated by name, not by religion nor by sect.

I may be pardoned if I digress for a short space and allude to an abuse so nearly allied to this error of the novelist, that it will not be out of place to mention it here. Unfortunately, there are criminals and wrong-doers of the Jewish religion. At times it is found necessary to place them behind prison bars, and then we have the delectable experience of being informed by the newspapers, following the example of the novelist, that N. N., a Hebrew, or Jew, was convicted of theft or some other crime. In statistics of reformatories and houses of refuge, I have already seen it mentioned that two, or three, or

four, or how great the number might be, of the inmates were Jews, and in vain have I looked for a statement of the religion of the remainder. If this is not done with intent, which I will be charitable enough to suppose it is not, it proves at least that that for which the Jews are so strenuously striving, not to be distinguished as Jews except in the religious sense, has not yet fully dawned upon the community.

Had, two thousand years ago, an Israelite been apprehended in Phoenicia, a neighboring country to Palestine, as a criminal, and the Phœnician account had informed the public that Eliezer ben Jacob, an Israelite, had been convicted of theft, that had been perfectly proper, for the Israelites were then still a nation; but now, when all Jewish national distinctions are lost, such invidious mentions are wrong and unjust. As Fagin stands on a level with Sykes, and the religion of neither can be blamed for such characters—since in all such instances the teachings of religion have been neglected and the evil in man been permitted to take the upper hand—so let our notice of this novel accomplish at least this much, that it gives us occasion to insist again on so much justice being done, that no wrong-doers be thrust upon public notice as of this faith, unless the practice become universal of mentioning the criminal's religion opposite his name. Fagin belongs to the Barabbas class of Jewish portrayals. It looks as if the author had made a study of the



criminal classes, and tacked on the name of Jew. What his motive was we have not been able to discover; if this was his opinion of the Jews, he must have modified it considerably in later life, as we shall soon see. To me it appears that Dickens did not intend to do an injustice to the Jews; he drew this character in as strong a manner as he could, and named him a Jew individually without considering that it would react to the detriment of all of that religion. Unfortunate it is that the character was designated a Jew, for I consider this a blot on the otherwise fair fame of the great fictionist, as it is the one instance in his works wherein harm ensued from his writings. But this must be said for him, that if the novel is read carefully, it will be seen that he draws *a* Jew, not *the* Jew; that is, one man, not the type—for nowhere can an expression be found that he considered the evil qualities of Fagin, Jewish qualities. Well had it been had this been so understood by all his readers; but, unfortunately, as so many of Dickens's characters have been taken as types, such as Squeers, Micawber, Mrs. Gamp, so was this looked upon as typical, and another inimical element aroused for the Jew to combat. As if conscious that he had been guilty of a great injustice, the novelist, in the last complete work that he wrote, "Our Mutual Friend," seems to atone for this wrong committed in his youth,



and we therefore leave the dark picture of Fagin to turn to a figure all light—Riah, the Jew in this other work.

The whole tone of the novelist, when speaking of or treating this character, sounds apologetic; he goes to the almost opposite extreme, and Riah is well nigh impossibly good; he has no evil traits, he is kind, gentle, compassionate, grateful, humble, long-suffering in misfortune; he accepts his hard lot without murmuring; he is misunderstood, considered a villain, a stony-hearted creditor, and yet this remarkable old man bears the stings of outrageous fortune with an equanimity worthy of the Stoic philosophers. What impresses us as still more peculiar, is that whenever Riah evinces a trait especially beautiful we are told that this is characteristic of his people, as though the novelist wished to say: "The Jews are not as black as I painted Fagin; they have many praiseworthy qualities, as evinced by this fine old man, who shows such nobility and elevation of character amid such distressing surroundings." Thus they stand—Fagin, the Jew of Dickens's youth, and Riah, he of his later years. Was it experience that taught him better? Had he met with such whose characters and doings impelled him to the thought that he had done a wrong in naming one of his blackest creations a Jew? Is Riah a set-off to Fagin, an apology? I can not but think so. A later judgment must always be

supposed to subvert an earlier one, and we are justified in concluding that Dickens's opinion of the Jews underwent a complete change, as we may learn from this novel, which may be regarded in a manner as his literary last will and testament. As the personage of Riah is not the most prominent in the tale, and as his characteristics may not have thoroughly impressed themselves on the minds of all, it may be well, especially as it can be done briefly, to state the striking features of the presentation, before giving an estimate of the truthfulness of the picture.

This admirable old man is in the power of a young villain, who draws all the profits from a disgraceful, grinding business, while the Jew is the ostensible, hard-hearted owner who will show no mercy. This false position he uncomplainingly fills, for the father of the young scamp had done him kindness, and had in a manner intrusted the welfare of the youth to him. He therefore feels it his duty to aid the son, even when such aid necessitates him to engage in so disreputable an occupation. This Master Fledgely reviles him, mocks him, rails at him; he receives it all with bent head and hands stretched out downward as if to deprecate the wrath of a superior. Not one word of anger escapes him, not one accent of wrath. With all his shabbiness there is something that attracts the notice of those about him. He looks not

mean; his words, the few that he utters, are impressive. Notwithstanding the comparatively small part he plays he is the most beautiful character of the whole novel; so strange, so peculiar, almost like another patriarch forced by circumstances into a false position. His first words are weighty: "Your people need speak truth sometimes, for they lie enough," is said to him, and he goes not into a long extenuation; he merely parries by a keen counter thrust: "Sir, there is too much untruth among all denominations of men," and immediately thereupon when his master, knowing the true state of affairs, that Riah, to whom he pays but a pittance as his weekly salary, is very poor and he is rich, asks: "Who but you and I ever heard of a poor Jew?" he answers: "The Jews. They hear of poor Jews often and are very good to them." This is one of the instances in which the novelist speaks so kindly of those whom he felt that in an earlier day he had wronged. About that which he says it is unnecessary to speak here further; in another place I have abundantly shown the great mistake of continually flaunting to the world the wealth of the Jews, which has aroused much of the envy and ill-feeling felt toward them, and much of the anti-semitism open and above board throughout European countries; there is so much poverty among them that the thousand and one benevolent associations with all the money at their command, can

not do more than even slightly ameliorate the misery of their poor. The Jewish poor seek not relief elsewhere. The principle of charity is so closely connected with the religion that among them one and the same word is used to express righteousness and charity. Therefore, when a few weeks ago at a public meeting of the Poor Association of this city, one of the speakers cited as a striking fact that very few Hebrews sought relief from the association, the reason for this is not that there are not sufficient who seek relief, nor that they are all rich, but that within their own religion the better situated lend a hand to their needy brethren.

The world learns not of the great poverty and suffering among them. Statistics show that there is proportionately no more, yes, that there is less, wealth among them than among other denominations.

Again the writer tells us that even for the pittance that Riah receives from his master he is grateful, and parenthetically remarks that in his race gratitude is strong and enduring. Whenever Riah appears it is always to advantage; he has a sad, sweet, benevolent smile; his actions are all those of kindness.

Gentleness, humility, are the terms wherein he is usually spoken of. He looks more like some superior creature benignantly blessing Mr. Fledgely, his master, than a poor dependent upon whom this one has set his foot.



But one more trait, and I will have done with quoting his excellencies. Being forced to assume the false position, so at variance with his true self, before others, and being especially down-cast when in the presence of a friend who knew him as himself, he appeared as the merciless grinder, Riah determined to leave this degrading service. The reasons he gives may be summed up in one sentence, viz: the fact of all the Jews being blamed because of his seeming wrong-doing. Dickens, through Riah, states this strongly. It only proves again that to which I referred before, that he intended by this character to present not only a man with beautiful traits, but wished to be in some manner a corrector of wrong impressions concerning the co-religionists of Riah.

Beautiful as is the character, and all honor that it does the novelist, there is a grave objection to it, and that is, the character is too beautiful, too unreal. If the portrayal of Fagin sins on the one side, that of Riah sins on the other. He is faultless; he is more than human. No man could have endured so sweetly, gently, and quietly that position; no man, rather than rap at the door at nine in the morning for fear of disturbing the inmate, would have sat down in the cold for an hour, and only rapped when he was almost freezing; that is a little beyond human nature. No man, who is not a hypocrite,

as which, surely it was not meant to represent Riah, would consider his master beneficent, who paid him a few shillings and pocketed the large earnings, and for this would be so grateful as to kiss the hem of his garment; the humility which he displays would pass with some as worthy of all praise; to us it appears too unnatural, too impossible.

Riah is as little the picture of the Jew as Fagin is; he gives utterance to some words about the Jews which are true enough, but he can not stand as a representative of the Jews. If they are to be characters in fiction, they wish but justice, and no more. An advocate who gives a rose-colored account of his client will not be believed. The Jew has his faults as all men have. There is as much harm in overestimating as in undervaluing. A constant flow of praise loses all strength for an impartial mind, as does also a constant flow of abuse. We have in fiction demoniacally bad Jews, and ideally good ones. Barabbas and Fagin on the one hand, Sheva, Rebecca, and Riah on the other. In the works we have treated thus far, the true picture has not yet been given; it will only be drawn by such a one who has made a searching and psychological study of the religious and hereditary traits of the descendants of this most remarkable stock. So many influences and agencies have combined in the formation of the historical Jewish character that it requires a

keen and observant mind, indeed, to separate it into its elements. In its wanderings it has acquired much. What is original, what is acquired; what is Jewish, what cosmopolitan? It is no easy task. It requires a feat of mental analysis, and the preparation necessary is very great—more probably than any fictionist can give it.

A figure such as Riah, although a beautiful creation, does not conduce to an appreciation or dissemination of the truth. After reading the book and pondering on the character, the thought will at once occur that no man, Jew or any other, is cast in so perfect a mold; exaggeration never serves its purpose, especially when on the side of the exceedingly good. Both these characters of Dickens are open to the same serious objection, they are not truthful; the one a mere villain, with no redeeming qualities, the other a fine spirit, without any dross; neither Jewish, except in name, for they stand not as representing in any way their religion. It is abundantly evident that the Jewish character was little studied; the presentation of Riah reminds us of some sweets that are given a patient after he has swallowed a very bitter dose. As little as the Jew wishes to be judged by the villain in "Oliver Twist," so little asks he to be measured by the benevolent old man in "Our Mutual Friend."

NOTE.—About forty years ago, several letters passed between Dickens and a Jewess relative to the subject treated in this chapter. I am indebted to Mr. Max J. Kohler, of New York, for having called my attention to these well-nigh forgotten letters. They are of more than passing interest, for they substantiate the hypothesis advanced in this chapter, viz., that Riah was drawn as an apology for Fagin. The letters are as follows:

## (LETTER 1.)

*June 22, 1863.*

*Dear Sir*—I venture to address you on a subject in which I am greatly interested. . . . But there are other oppressions much heavier, other stings far sharper, than the fetters and goads of Damascus, Lebanon or Russia.

In this country, where the liberty of the subject is fully recognized, where the law knows no distinction of creed, the pen of the novelist, the gibe of the pamphleteer is still whetted against the sons of Israel. It has been said that Charles Dickens, the large-hearted, whose works plead so eloquently for the oppressed of his country, has encouraged a vile prejudice against the despised Hebrew. We have lived to see the day when Shakespeare's Shylock receives a very different rendering to that which was given to it fifty years ago. The great master has at last found an exponent. Fagin, I fear, admits of only one interpretation. But Charles Dickens lives. The author can justify himself or atone for a great wrong on a whole scattered nation.

Again apologizing for intruding so long on your valuable time, I remain, dear sir, faithfully and sincerely yours,

E.

TO CHARLES DICKENS.



## (REPLY TO LETTER 1.)

Friday, 10 July, 1863.

Dear Madam—I hope you will excuse this tardy reply to your letter. It is often impossible for me by any means to keep pace with my correspondents. I beg leave to say that if there be any general feeling on the part of the intelligent Jewish people that I have done them what you describe as a “great wrong,” they are a far less sensible, a far less just, and a far less good tempered people than I have always supposed them to be. Fagin, in “*Oliver Twist*,” is a Jew because it unfortunately was true of the time to which that story refers that that class of criminals almost invariably was a Jew. But surely no sensible man or woman of your persuasion can fail to observe—firstly, that all the rest of the wicked *dramatis personæ* are Christians; and, secondly, that he is called the “Jew” not because of his religion, but because of his race. If I were to write a story in which I described a Frenchman or a Spaniard as the “Roman Catholic,” I should do a very indecent and unjustifiable thing; but I make mention of Fagin as the Jew because he is one of the Jewish people, and because it conveys that kindly idea of him which I should give my readers of a Chinaman by calling him a “Chinese.”

The inclosed is quite a nominal subscription toward the good object in which you are interested; but I hope it may serve to show you that I have no feeling toward the Jewish people but a friendly one. I always speak well of them, whether in public or private, and bear testimony (as I ought to do) to their perfect good faith in other transactions as I have ever had with them; and in my “*Child’s History of England*,” I have lost no op-

portunity of setting forth their cruel persecution in old times.

Dear madame, faithfully yours,  
CHARLES DICKENS.

(LETTER 2.)

July 14, 1868.

*Dear Sir*—Pray receive my best thanks for your kind letter and its inclosure. I have a great dislike to making myself troublesome, yet trust you will pardon my venturing a few words on the Jewish character. Is it a fact that the Jewish race and religion are inseparable? If a Jew embrace any other faith, he is no longer known as one of the race, either to his own people or to the Gentiles to whom he may have joined himself. Does anyone designate Mr. Disraeli as the Jew? I cannot dispute the fact that at the time to which "Oliver Twist" refers there were some Jew receivers of stolen goods; and although, in my own mind, it is a distinction without a difference, I do not think that it could at all be proved that there was one so base as to train young thieves in the manner described in that work. If, as you remark, "all must observe that the other criminal character were Christians," they are at least contrasted with characters of good Christians; this poor, wretched Fagin stands alone—the Jew.

How grateful we are to Sir Walter Scott and Mrs. S. C. Hall for their delineations of some of our race; yet Isaac of York was not all virtue. I hope we shall not forfeit your opinion of our sense and good temper—perhaps we are oversensitive; but are we not overflayed? Are we not constantly irritated by the small gnats who may fret us, yet are in themselves too insignificant to be annihilated? It is only when a great mind appears to be against us that we plaintively appeal.

We dwell in this country very little known; our domestic customs entirely unknown. I have myself been greatly astonished at the ignorance of my countrymen in general concerning what they appear to think an entirely foreign people. Look at the blood accusations from time to time rising against us—even such a popular paper as “Chambers”’ disseminating that calumny. I hazard the opinion that it would well repay an author of reputation to examine more closely into the manners and character of the British Jews, and to represent them as they really are—“Nothing extenuate, nor aught set down in malice.”

I remain, dear, sir, yours, etc.

To Charles Dickens, Esq.

The reply to the letter of the 14th of July, 1863, was the character of Riah, in “Our Mutual Friend.” Riah was open to criticism, which the writer addressed to Mr. Dickens, and she received the following reply:

*Wednesday, Nov. 16, 1864.*

*Dear Madame*—I have received your letter with great pleasure, and hope to be (as I have always been in heart) the best of friends with the Jewish people. The error you point out to me had occurred to me, as most errors do to most people, when it was too late to correct it. But it will do no harm. The peculiarities of dress and manner are fused together for the sake of picturesqueness.

Dear madame, faithfully yours,

CHARLES DICKENS.

## VII. DISRAELI'S "CONINGSBY" AND "TANCRED."

Benjamin Disraeli was descended from an old Jewish family. His father, Isaac, the author of "The Curiosities of Literature," and other works, had some misunderstanding with the trustees of the synagogue, left it, and had his son Benjamin baptized in the Christian church at the age of twelve years. The son was brilliant and ambitious, and was determined to make his way in the world. He was nominally a Christian, therefore the civil disabilities under which the Jews labored did not stand in his way. After many failures, he at last succeeded in having himself elected to Parliament. The fact of his having been born a Jew was often cast up to him, and he might expect the same in the future. With characteristic boldness he did not, as many another would have done, attempt to shield himself from this charge by pointing to the fact that he was now a Christian, and repudiating all connection with the Jews, but he took up the gauntlet, turned upon the haughty English aristocrats, and in several works set himself to the task of proving that he was descended from the true nobility of the earth, that in comparison with the splendor and length of his lineage, the



oldest English families were but as of yesterday. He wished to show that he was proud of his descent from a race which, "scattered, banished, plundered, and humiliated for thousands of years by Egyptian Pharaohs, Assyrian kings, Roman Emperors, Scandinavian crusaders, Gothic chiefs, and holy inquisitors, had still held their own, had kept their race pure, and remained to this day irrepressible, inexhaustible, indispensable, full of energy and genius." Disraeli had adopted the novel as the medium for the communication of his ideas. His ideas and thoughts of the Jews, their past, their present, he laid down in two works of fiction, "Coningsby" and "Tancred," and in a chapter of his biography of Lord George Bentinck. These must be taken together; "Tancred" is a continuation of "Coningsby," and in the biography the ideas expressed in "Tancred" are in a great measure reproduced. In these novels we have to do not so much with individual characters (as in the works we have thus far treated) as with an idea which is stated, repeated, proved, strengthened, enforced by example. I can not take time to review the plots of these novels. The plots here, at best, are only minor; the novels were written with a purpose, and this purpose I will concern ourselves with at once. Disraeli is a shining exception to but too many, if not all, of the class of "converted Jews," whose every effort it is to hide their origin; to him the Jewish race was

"the oldest of unmixed blood," and therefore it could not be exterminated.

"Mixed races may persecute and oppress; they may have temporary power, but in the end they must disappear, while the pure race, trampled upon, oppressed, humiliated, will ever arise in its power and live on while others die out." This race idea forms the groundwork of the Jewish portions of these works. The exponent of these ideas in "Coningsby" is Sidonia, a grand, mysterious figure, descended from one of those families which, in Spain, pretended to be Catholics while they were secretly Jews, one of those wonderful New-Christian families, members of which rose to the highest dignities in Church and State. Proud is Sidonia of this descent; wealthy as the Rothschilds, a power in every European court, versed in the wisdom of all ages and all lands, but with all this wisdom, power, and wealth not a citizen of his native land, for the civil disabilities of the Jews had not yet been removed. The anomaly of the position of the Jews, for whose full emancipation Disraeli was working, is here well brought out. All Sidonia's expressions tend to one point—intense pride in his race and his religion. He is "of that faith that the apostles professed before they followed their Master." And for that race and that faith Disraeli wishes to speak a mighty word. The Goths persecuted the Jews in Spain; where are they so cruel and so

haughty? Despised suppliants to that very race which they banished, for some miserable portion of the treasure which their habits of industry have again accumulated. Where is Spain? Fallen, degraded, while the race which it expelled is more prosperous than ever. It existed from time far back; it exists to-day; it will exist on.

“The Christendom which thou hast quitted,” says the spirit of Arabia to Tancred, “was a savage forest, while the cedars of Lebanon for countless ages had built the palaces of mighty kings.” Here it is that Disraeli brings out his theory of race. Race is every thing; nationality is only intermediate. The individual is great, because he combines in himself all the great qualities of the race. He tells his readers, as it were: Hear ye, ye who look down upon and despise the Hebrew race, ye who taunt me as being descended from it, it of all races is unmixed; it is the most ancient if not the only unmixed race that dwells in cities. Is it not marvelous that it has not disappeared? It has defied exile, massacre, spoliation; it has defied Time. It has been expatriated, but this has been one of the reasons of its endurance. If you wish to make a race endure, expatriate them. Conquer them, and they may blend with their conquerors; exile them and they will live apart forever.

Disraeli is so taken up with this idea of the



purity of race that he permits it to quite dominate him. He was so ardent in his desire to make good his claim to superiority of birth to those about him, that he looked at but one side of the matter. In summing up the excellencies of the Jewish race, our author falls into exaggeration. All the great names he mentions as Jews is but characteristic of a tendency among all the fervent advocates of the superiority of the Jews to make every thing noteworthy Jewish. He finds Jewish blood in the veins of a Mozart, a Rossini, of all the great singers; he tells us that in all the cabinets of Europe Jews are among the leading diplomats; he even goes so far as to suppose that Napoleon had Jewish blood coursing through him. Flattering as all this is to the vanity of Jews, and proud as they must be of their great men, yet this claiming of great men as Jews without absolute proof has a pernicious tendency.

It is not championing the Jews, if championing they need, to cite these few names when so many can be mentioned as controverting this. The great man belongs to the world, and he is the result of world-influence; only when he is great as a teacher of religion, or in some branch in which religious influences tell, is it due to his birth as Jew or Christian, for early religious influences mold him; but greatness in other regards depends not specially hereon.

But Disraeli is treading on safer and surer



ground when he speaks of the wonderful influence of the Jews from past days on Europe, when he fervently exclaims that in his day the Hebrew child enters upon adolescence only to learn that he is the Pariah of that ungrateful Europe that owes to him the best part of its laws, a fine portion of its literature, all its religion. Modern Europe has been civilized by two little nations, those of the Jordan and the Ilyssus. An Arabian tribe, the Jewish, an *Ægean* clan, the Grecian, have been the promulgators of our knowledge. The influence of and the debt to the Hebrews of the world is enormous. The life and property of England are protected by the laws of Sinai. The hard-working people are secured in every seven a day of rest by the laws of Sinai. And yet they persecute the Jews and hold up to odium the race to whom they are indebted for the sublime legislation which alleviates the inevitable lot of the laboring multitude. The most popular poet in England is not Wordsworth nor Byron, not even Shakespeare; it is the sweet singer of Israel. Independently of their admirable laws, which have elevated our condition, and of their exquisite poetry, which has charmed it; independently of their heroic history, which has animated us to the pursuit of public liberty, we are indebted to the Hebrew people for our knowledge of the true God. And of this influence he calls out grandly in one place: "Sons of

Israel, when you recollect that you created Christendom, you may pardon the Christians even their Autos-da-fe."

But the chief object of these writings, apart from showing the influence of Jews on European thought, the absurdity of denying full emancipation to those who have given the best in life and thought, and his race hobby, is to draw the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. Tancred goes to Asia for inspiration, to investigate the great Asian mystery; for from Asia alone great movements can go forth, since there alone the Divine influence rests, and there alone God spoke with man. The narrowness and fallacy of this conception I shall notice later on. In Bethany Tancred meets with Eva, the Jewess, and, from their conversation, as well as from the chapter in the biography of Bentinck, which I mentioned before, we gather his thoughts of the relationship of the two religions. Christianity is Judaism for the multitude. Christianity is an outcome of Judaism, and when the Christians reflect that the teachings of Jesus are founded on those of Moses, surely gratitude, if nothing else, should prevent them from further oppressing and humiliating those who gave them a God and a religion. The first question that Eva asks Tancred when she learns that he is a Christian, is whether he belongs to those Franks who worship a Jewess, or to those who break her images and do not bow down to the mother

of Jesus, but worship the son of Mary, likewise a Jew. And when he tells her that the Christian Church will teach her what true Christianity is, she asks which, and enumerates the dozen different churches, all of which differ, and concludes that it is wise "to remain within the pale of a church which is older than all of them, the church in which Jesus was born, and which he never quitted." He who diffused Christianity among the nations was not a senator of Rome nor a philosopher of Athens, but Paul, a Jew of Tarsus, who founded the seven churches of Asia. And that greater church, great even amid its terrible corruptions, that has avenged the victory of Titus by subjugating the capital of the Cæsars, and has changed every one of the Olympian temples into altars of the God of Sinai and of Calvary, was founded by another Jew, a Jew of Galilee. Thus would he show that all the greatness of the Christian Church is due to Jews, and had it not been for them Christianity would never have arisen; its morality is all founded on the morality of the Jewish religion. "When the lawyer tempted Jesus, and inquired how he was to inherit eternal life, the Great Master of Galilee referred him to the writings of Moses. There he would find recorded the whole duty of man; to love God with all his heart and soul and strength and mind, and his neighbor as himself. These two principles are embodied in the writings of Moses, and are the essence of



Christian morals." But there is a great fallacy in regard to the Jews, which Disraeli felt himself called upon to contradict, the fallacy which originated the conception of the "Wandering Jew," and he makes Eva ask Tancred: "You think the present state of my race penal and miraculous?" And when Tancred answers in the affirmative, and gives as his reason "that it is a punishment ordained for the rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah"—the common Christian conception—Eva, in the name of the author, proceeds to disprove this prevalent thought. In a later book Disraeli repeats the argument in well nigh the same words, somewhat as follows: This doctrine, that the dispersion of the Jews throughout the world is a punishment because Jesus was crucified, a doctrine still held by millions, he says is neither historically true nor dogmatically sound. It is not historically true, because at the time of Jesus' death, the Jews had for centuries been scattered all over the then civilized world, from Western Europe to Eastern Asia, in Rome, in Alexandria, in Antioch, in Parthia, and, therefore, their dispersion could not have resulted from the fact that they did not receive Jesus as the Messiah. It is not dogmatically sound, because no passage in the sacred writings warrants, in the slightest degree, the penal assumption. The words of the mob, "His blood be upon us and our children," cited by Matthew, are, at times,



strangely quoted as the justification for the belief. The criminals said that, not the judge. "Is it a principle of your jurisprudence to permit the guilty to assign their own punishment? Why should that transfer any of the infliction to their posterity? What evidence have you that Omnipotence accepted the offer? He whom you acknowledge as omnipotent, prayed to Jehovah to forgive them, on account of their ignorance. But, admit that the offer was accepted, which, in my opinion, is blasphemy, is the cry of a rabble at a public execution to bind a nation? What had the thousands who were not near nor present to do with the crucifixion?" In this strain Eva continues, and, as the last word of the conversation says: "We have some conclusions in common. We agree that half Christendom worships a Jewess, and the other half a Jew. Now, let me ask you one more question. Which do you think should be the superior race, the worshiped or the worshippers?"

I have given at some length Disraeli's words. He felt it necessary to be thus somewhat apologetic. It was the time that the question of the emancipation of the Jews was being agitated and the good feeling had to be fostered; it was the time, too, that but a few years before the whole of Europe had been stirred by the Damascus and Rhodes affair, to which I referred in the last chapter, when the old lie and calumny, the

cause of so much misery, had been trumped up, that Jews had killed Christians to use their blood at their Passover; not only the fanatics of Asia but even Europeans gave credence, and the unfortunates were persecuted and murdered, so that the nineteenth century seemed to have been transformed into the sixteenth. The Jewish blood that flowed in Disraeli's veins was fired, and he wrote this vindication, serving thus three purposes: first, to show that he belonged to the oldest nobility of the world, and that when his enemies belittled him because he was a Jew it was theirs to keep silent, for his ancestors had dwelt in palaces when theirs had roamed about in the forests, companions of the wild beasts; secondly, to speak a word in favor of full emancipation by dispelling the prevalent thought that the condition of the Jews was due to Divine wrath; thirdly, to preach his doctrine of the superiority of pure race and blood.

It is not my object now to go into any discussion of the relative merits of Judaism and Christianity, but this much may be said in regard to Disraeli's effort to offer reasons why Christians' opinions are unjust, that all apologetics of this kind are unscientific; they base upon a false theological conception; the true position and condition of affairs in Judea at the time of Christ must be understood before any arguments can be brought forth. This is neither the time nor opportunity to present this pic-

ture, which I hope to do at some future day. In this, however, the author was correct, that the whole usually accepted Christian thought on this subject is distorted and perverted; it understands not Judaism of that time nor of today; it understands not the rise or origin of Christianity; that it was a mixture of Judaism and Paganism; "a Judaism for the masses," as our author well says; that Paul, and not Jesus, is the real founder of Christianity. Disraeli, being a Christian in outward form at least, views Calvary as the grand closing scene of the divine drama begun on Sinai, and according to this has all his conceptions shaped. He merely takes the accepted theological interpretations for granted, and goes upon them. All honor to him, that in his rising power, at the time when they most needed the help of the great and the influential, he forgot not the stock from which he sprang. All honor to him, that even in the zenith of his glory, many years later, at the Congress of Berlin, which for the time settled the destinies of Europe, one of the points upon which he, as Premier of England, the head of Europe's proudest aristocracy, insisted, was that Roumania should and must grant equal rights to all, this having special reference to the Jews, who had th re been so cruelly persecuted.

There are several points, however, in which the conservative statesman permitted his opinions to be shaped by his political preferences.



In one place he says: "The Jews are essentially Tories. Toryism is but copied from the mighty prototype which has fashioned Europe." And in another, "They are a living and the most striking evidence of the falsity of that pernicious doctrine of modern times—the natural equality of man. The native tendency of the Jewish race, who are justly proud of their blood, is against the doctrine of the equality of man. All the tendencies of the Jewish race are conservative." The Jews of old, with their national surroundings, their narrow idea of being the chosen people, their looking down upon the heathen, were representatives of these ideas. Their descendants, however, have been trained for centuries in the bitter school of adversity, and though always on the side of order and government and quiet, it is with them we may say as with all others, some will be found in Conservative, others in Liberal ranks; their opinions are due not to descent but to circumstances. In England, many Jews will be found leaning to the Conservative side; and, judging from his own surroundings, Disraeli was correct in his conclusions. In Germany, on the other hand, they are among the levelers, or, at least, the Liberals; Heine, born in an earlier day; Lasker, a Liberal leader in our time; Marx and Lassalle, the apostles of Socialism. In France, the same phenomenon greets us. In Italy, they are on the side of freedom. So that as the same fact has



met us so often before, their work and their position, here, too, is due to the man and not the Jew. The Jews can not be classed altogether; in one country they will act thus, in another thus; they are guided and governed as other men are. The Jews in this country are among the most outspoken opponents of Socialism; in Russia, many will be found in the ranks of Nihilism; in England, they are mostly of the Montefiore stamp, rigidly conservative in religion, hence also in politics; in Germany, they follow the wave of Liberal thought; they are no longer one community; to class them altogether is absurd. The same motives do not actuate them; the same opinions do not sway them; the old proverb, "All Israel are brethren," holds neither in politics nor in social considerations, in nothing but in their religion. Therefore is Disraeli exceedingly narrow and unappreciative of the true position of the Jews when he classes them altogether in a passage like the following: "They may be traced in the last outbreak of the destructive principle in Europe. An insurrection takes place against tradition and aristocracy, against religion and property. Destruction of the Semitic principle, extirpation of the Jewish religion, whether in the Mosaic or Christian form, the natural equality of man and the abrogation of property, are proclaimed by the secret societies, who form provisional governments, and men of the Jewish

race are found at the head of every one of them. The people of God co-operate with atheists, the most skillful accumulators of property ally themselves with communists, the peculiar and chosen race touch the hand of all the scum and low castes of Europe! And all this because they wish to destroy that ungrateful Christendom which owes to them even its name, and whose tyranny they can no longer endure." Here speaks the English aristocrat in sweeping terms, failing to make the vital distinction between Jew and Jew as he would between man and man. For centuries they have been reared among differing influences, and these influences tell. Anglo-Saxon in England, Anglo-Saxon in North Germany, Anglo-Saxon in America, for example, will not be judged by the same standards. They are now respectively English, German, and American; and so it is with the Jews, they, too, have mightily changed since they were all one nation in little Palestine. They are so no more. How different the ideas concerning this Jewish stock are among different thinkers! With Disraeli they are Tories, born aristocrats, the strongest refutation of the doctrine of the equality of man. Let me quote another, who stands on quite a different platform. We are told, "It was from Judea that there arose the most persistent protests against inequality and the most ardent aspirations after justice that have ever raised humanity out of the actual into the ideal. We feel

the effect still. It is thence has come the leaven of revolution which still moves the world. Job saw evil triumphant, and yet believed in justice. Israel's prophets, while thundering against iniquity, announced the good time coming." (Lavelaye, "Socialism of To-day," Introduction, XVI.) Both opinions are right, as applied to later Jews. There are aristocrats among them and Socialists, but, be it remembered, not as Jews.

There is yet another conception in which Disraeli is exceedingly narrow. In a conversation with Sidonia, Tancred says: "I have for a time suspected that inspiration is not only a divine, but a local quality," and Sidonia answers: "I believe that God spoke to Moses on Mount Horeb, and you believe that he was crucified in the person of Jesus on Mount Calvary. Both were children of Israel and spoke Hebrew to the Hebrews. The prophets were only Hebrews. The apostles were only Hebrews. It is a part of the divine scheme that its influence shall only be local." And therefore Tancred determines to visit Jerusalem to inhale some of that inspiration, which is denied to Europe and rests on the Eastern lands, where God's word came to man. He is told, when speaking of this same fact of the localism of inspiration with an Arab sheikh, "Be sure that God never spoke to any one but an Arab." How narrow a thought! How contracted a mental vision! What! the inspiration



from the Universal Spirit is confined to one little tract of land. What! the inspiration from God was vested in but a few souls, and then died out never to appear among mankind again. Not alone Tancred thought this, but there are myriads who think that since the last of the prophets inspiration has disappeared from among men. Away with so distressing a thought! Inspiration is not dead. Inspiration is confined to no time and to no clime. Not the Hebrew prophets alone were inspired; every man who has been blessed with the divine gift of genius has been inspired. No matter whether as poets or as philosophers, no matter whether as thinkers or as workers, the whole long list of the world's great men who have risen far above their fellow-men, whose minds had that quality which we call genius, and which we can not explain, have had the divine afflatus breathed into their souls. Yes, Isaiah was inspired, but so was also Socrates, and Plato, and Shakespeare, and Milton, and Newton, and Kant, and Goethe, and Schiller, though in a different sense; there is a difference of degree.

Yes, as religious geniuses, Israel's prophets stand unapproached; three thousand years ago they uttered the truths to which mankind is but now gradually coming. But inspiration died not out with them. Inspiration is not local, inspiration is not temporal; from the frigid zones unto the tropics, from the beginning of time



unto our day, which so many with Disraeli bewail as being so helplessly degenerate, God's voice is heard in the utterances of the choice ones of the earth. Neither Judaism, nor Christianity, nor Mohammedanism, nor Buddhism, can lay claim exclusively to inspiration, as in former days each and every one did for itself; it belongs to man, and He from whom inspiration flows, is the God of humanity. Disraeli's fervent belief in race again led him astray here; he speaks of the great Asian mystery, as if from Asia alone great movements can go forth, for only in Asia has God appeared. If any thing, Asia is dead; it changes not; it stands to-day where it did a thousand years ago. From the western lands new thoughts and impulses proceed. Some grand Asiatic scheme always seemed to float before his mind. In "David Alroy," another Jewish novel, an Eastern rhapsody, he hints it. In these novels he further speaks of an Asian movement; perhaps with this conception is connected his desire of naming the Queen of England Empress of India, and his fulfillment of that desire. Perhaps he dreamt of some grand Asian Empire from which would go forth the impulse that would settle the distracted state of Europe.

Disraeli's conception of the Jews is what might naturally be expected from one who by inclination, by circumstance, by the natural bent of his mind, leant toward conservatism in thought

and in action. To him they were the firm upholders of tradition and stable principle. The reformed and liberal movement among them he did not appreciate; he looked upon them as a race in contradistinction to their religion, instead of feeling that it is only as religious communities that they exist as Jews; but he was their ardent defender at the time when such defense was necessary. In this popular form he may have and he did open the eyes of many a Christian to truths, which, if they had been uttered at all, were buried in volumes which never reached the masses. He was himself a representative of the characteristics he gave to the Jews. The novels are one long panegyric of Jewish greatness and an appeal to the Christians to stop and think of the relations between the two religions before they judge hastily.

Judaism, however, looks higher than he portrayed it. Freed from the shackles of national and political existence, above time and place, in its purity it expresses the thought of the One, the great I Am, universal and unconfined; spirituality pure, it stands as the exponent of the magnificent conception of its prophet of old, the unity of mankind, the unity of God.

## VIII. GEORGE ELIOT'S "DANIEL DERONDA."

### I.

The deepest thinker among English women, and one of the greatest of fictionists, toward the close of her author-career, wrote a novel which, for uniqueness of theme and treatment is interesting, for thought and reasoning is remarkable, for learning is striking. Other novels had been written with Jews as characters, but they were mostly superficial in conception; this was the first by a non-Jewish writer that made Judaism a study. "Daniel Deronda" met with a varying reception at different hands. The critics pronounced it a failure; some ridiculed, others called it weak; the world read and did not understand. The subject was too unknown, too peculiar, too much out of the range of the common, to be perfectly, or even partially grasped. The novelist had taken a bold step. She had written an "epic in prose." The subject was grand enough for any epic; it dealt with large forces, with the questions of race and religion. "Daniel Deronda" is not George Eliot's most popular book, but it is her greatest and most matured. It was the last child of her genius, and it was worthy of, it overtopped its predecessors.

The Jewish race, its restoration to Palestine, its taking its stand in the great commonwealth of nations, form the burden of the work. The subject of race seemed to be a congenial one to her mind. Years before she had written a dramatic poem, "The Spanish Gypsy," and there the same ideal appears, the gathering of the wandering Zingali tribes into one nation with their own land. Zarca is the Mordecai, Fedalma the Deronda. But the earlier work has not the power of the later. It appears only as the seed that oped and ripened into the full fruit of the novel. All her novels have a religious element, but in grandeur, power, and might, there is but one of her characters that can approach the ideal conception of Mordecai, and that is the magnificent figure of Savonarola in *Romola*.

A cursory reading of the novel will at once disclose the fact that it consists of two distinct portions; of the one, Gwendolen Harleth is the central figure, of the other Mordecai. Daniel Deronda is the binding link between the two parts. The former portion it lies not within my province to discuss; I will turn at once to the other, the Jewish parts.

The author did not approach her task without preparation. As before writing her novel, *Romola*, she is said to have spent many a day in Florence studying and observing, frequenting the repositories of medieval art and learning,



gaining a knowledge of time and place so that her novel stands as a monument to her industry and learning, and is authoritative for the period treated, so too, in preparation for the writing of *Daniel Deronda*, did she store her great mind with a knowledge of the Jewish past, and a keen observance of earlier Jewish customs. We are astonished at the exactitude of her statements; there are but few errors, which can be readily condoned. She describes the observance of the Friday eve in the home. She takes us into a synagogue of Frankfort, and remarks upon the service there conducted; she describes for us a marriage scene as it was, and tells us of the last words of the Jew before death—the confession of the Divine unity. We learn from her pages of that wonderful bit of autobiography of the Polish Jew, Solomon Maimon. She has delved into Jewish history, and we are carried along by the passionate recountal of the wrongs inflicted on the Jews, the sufferings and persecutions. Here and there a legend is told from the Jewish writings, the Talmud, or Midrash; again we have a sentence that fell from the lips of a sage of old. That strange product of Jewish mysticism, the Kabbala, is referred to, and the division of Jews into Rabbanites and Karaites is cited. Jehudah Halevi's word, with which we have already met in her "*Spanish Gypsy*," is again quoted, "the Jewish nation is the heart of the nations;" Ibn Ezra, too, is noticed. The

great Jewish thought is given expression to, that the unity of God presupposes the unity of mankind. There is, too, all the weight of thought necessary for so great a subject; the same close reasoning, the same psychological analysis that characterized her earlier works, reappear. She came to the task well equipped. How did she fulfill the task? Does her presentation do justice to the thoughts and ideals of the Jews? Did she correctly grasp the tendency of the Judaism of to-day? Are the characters she presents as Jewish drawn from life, and do they evince a true knowledge of the development of the character?

The answers to these questions we must gather from a close study of the pages of the work. Most of these Jewish characters we can dismiss with a few words; two only, besides Mordecai, offer opportunity for larger treatment—Deronda and Mirah. The Cohen family, with whom Mordecai lodges, give to the tale the only humorous element, with the exception of the oddities of Hans Meyrick. It is a family such as you can meet any where in the large cities, a family of Jews made much what they are by circumstances. The father, Ezra Cohen, is a brisk, prosperous merchant, embodying much of the old trading spirit, boastful of his success, proud of his business; his son Jacob, with his trading propensities bids fair to become what his father is. The old mother carries, "be-

neath a rough exterior, the affection that abides in Jewish hearts, as a sweet odor in things long crushed and hidden from the outer air." Ignorant as the family is, commonplace as is their life, material as are their pursuits, they yet have something left of a traditional ideality.

They give a home to Mordecai, the poor scholar, and with them he is welcome until the end. The sentiment, that learning shows superiority, and the involuntary regard for the learned man, however mean and lowly his exterior, so well brought out here, well attest the attitude of the Jews in the most troubled times in this matter. After country and temple were lost, the nobility that was recognized as occupying the first rank, was that of learning. The wise man was the most honored of the community. While for centuries, during the Dark Ages, the surrounding world was sunk in ignorance and the magic wand of superstition held all beneath its enslaving sway, the bright light of learning diffused its rays among the Jews, and ever after, even among the lowly and untaught of their number, there was kept alive this thought of the greatness of knowledge. There unconsciously reappears in this ignorant family this respect for learning and the feeling that there is blessing in having the scholar beneath the roof and at the board. There is expressed too in their language and dealings, though not so re-



finer and cultured, something of the kindness of heart, a Jewish trait in all times.

Deronda's mother, feeling what it was to have "a man's force of genius, and yet to suffer the slavery of being a girl," not daring disobey her father, a man of iron will, repressed by all the legalism of the old Jewish life, to gain freedom broke loose from it, and determined that her son should be raised as an English Christian, not as a Jew; he should never know the restrictions and miseries she had experienced. She is but one of that great number who, in the earlier decades of this century, having no love for Judaism—seeing not its ideal side, feeling only that it prevented them at that time from pursuing a desired career, readily threw it off for material advantages. Among those who can be named are Heine, Börne, Gans, the daughters of Mendelssohn, Fanny Lewald, and others less noted. The very circumstance of having been born a Jew was then sufficient to close every career to the ambitious, and this, coupled with the fact that Judaism had become, in a great measure, a mass of forms and ceremonies no longer consistent with life, brought about this sad result, that many, no longer seeing any thing in the religion but a formalism and a legalism, turned from it and adopted Christianity—not from conviction, but for no other reason than that this was the "open sesame" which unbarred the gates of the world to them. This



state of affairs, too, opened the eyes of others, to whom Judaism was still something more than a name; and they, appreciating the needs of the time and of the people, instituted the reform movement, which since then has accomplished so much. As one of those who felt only the restrictions of Jewish legalism, but were unmoved by any of its great thoughts and conceptions, Deronda's mother is presented. As intense a Jew as her father had been, so intense was her feeling the other way.

In introducing her as a great singer, and Klesmer as a remarkable pianist, and Mirah with her perfect voice, the author seems to point to the fact of the greatness of the Jews in music and in song, the only manner in which a people, so greatly gifted in many ways and directions, could give expression to the æsthetic sense. It is evident why there could be no sculptors or painters among the Jews in ancient or medieval times, for well-nigh all the works of art treated subjects of a religious character, and the Jews, with their strict monotheism and the literal interpretation of the second commandment, could naturally pursue none of the plastic arts. Hence, music and poetry were the only channels in which the æsthetic nature among them could develop itself. In our later day, however, when all subjects are brought within the scope of these arts, and when it is felt that the fashioning of figures does not indicate idolatry,

as was the conception of an earlier time, many a Jew has gained distinction in these branches. Jewish this woman is not at all. She has no affection; she loved nothing but her voice—now that it is gone, she has nothing to live for. Deronda is to her a beautiful creature, nothing more; not a pulse of maternal affection throbs when she sees him the first time after a lapse of many years; she, with her coldness, her antipathy to every thing Jewish, is an admirable foil to the other Jewish woman of the book, Mirah, all warmth, all affection, all love.

With Mirah, the Jewish character is first introduced, and in her person a beautiful character it is—beautiful in every way, in her actions, in the affection for her mother's memory, in the pity and sympathy for her scapegrace father. An artistic soul, seeming to have gathered within her nature all the beauty, without a blemish, one perfect whole, finely strung, a sympathetic heart, for her it is "much easier to share in love than in hatred. Her religion is of one fiber with her affections." It is deep-seated in her. 'Mid evil and temptation, she had kept herself pure. The hallowing influence of her life had come from the spirit of her whose every accent she remembered as fraught with a mother's love. Her Mirah always had in her mind. They could never be really parted. She wished to be a good Jewess, because her mother had been. She reasoned no more about it. The fact

was there. She says, when spoken to about becoming a Christian: "I will never separate myself from my mother's people. I was forced to fly from my father, but if he came back in age, and in weakness, and in want, and needed me, should I say, 'This is not my father?' If he had shame, I must share it. It was he who was given to me for my father, and not another. And so it is with my people. I will always be a Jewess. I will love Christians when they are good, like you, but I will always cling to my people. I will always worship with them." So it is throughout, that fervid Jewish feeling which is hers.

It is inborn. She has drunk it in with her mother's milk in her mother's home. Oh! that Jewish home, the remembrance of which passed before her mind like a beautiful vision. Early had she been stolen from that mother's side, but she thinks her "life began with waking up and loving my mother's face; it was so near to me, and her arms were round me and she sung to me. One hymn she sang so often, so often; and then she taught me to sing it with her—it was the first I ever sung. They were always Hebrew hymns she sung; and because I never knew the meaning of the words they seemed full of nothing but our love and happiness. When I lay in my little bed, and it was all white above me, she used to bend over me between me and the white and sing in a sweet, low voice." Thus is Mirah, all

memory, all affection, the spirit of conservatism; she represents all that was beautiful in the old Jewish customs without any of the narrowness—the love and affection of the Jewish home, untainted and untouched by the miseries of the outer world. She appears like some vision of all that was fair and tender in the past, with none of the hardness and harshness. She reminds us of some pure Jewish maiden of old, a Sulamith perhaps, in modern guise, moving among modern figures, but her soul is in the past. The doubting, inquiring spirit of the present has not touched her—she is the picture of childlike faith. She is a woman of women, with only womanly qualities; in all the vicissitudes of a changing life she retains her innocence and sweetness. From her, however, we learn naught of Jewish conceptions. She is well pictured as the Jewish woman of the past, who took no interest in religious speculations or discussions. The Jewish woman was the central figure of all home scenes, one of the vital elements of the life of Judaism, in truth, of all religion. She stood for the sentiment as the man represented the intellect. Honored and beloved was she as wife and mother, as the guardian spirit of the home, but outside of this she took but little part in religious discussions and doings. This belonged to the men, and for this we must look to the men in our novel. Daniel Deronda and Mordecai embody the ideas of the



book, which with startling novelty to the greater public were so vividly expressed.

Daniel Deronda is presented to us as a wonderful character, well-nigh as perfect as man can be drawn. "There was scarcely a delicacy of feeling of which he was not capable." "His inborn lovingness was strong enough to keep itself on a level with resentment." "In him the sense of injury bred—not the will to inflict injuries, but a hatred of all injury." "From boyhood up he was actuated by sympathy for all, a sympathy that shaped his nature, and was the chief and great characteristic in his intercourse with others." "This sympathy always impelled him toward the unfortunate, and caused him to withdraw almost coldly from the fortunate. He had a passion for pelted people." "He had a stamp of rarity in a subdued fervor of sympathy, an activity of imagination in behalf of others which did not show itself offensively, but was continually seen in acts of consideration which struck his companions as moral eccentricity." "His conscience included sensibilities far beyond the common, and persons were attracted to him in proportion to the possibility of defending them." Here then was this exceptional character placed in humdrum English society. His soul "striving for an ideal—for he was early impassioned by ideas, and burned his fire on these heights—could not be satisfied with the common objects of life which content

most men." "He had no desire to pass through life as did his neighbor." As he had a "yearning for wide knowledge, so too was he possessed of dreams of a wide activity." In the material age of unfaith he looked in vain for such a lofty object of life. "There was danger that, owing to irresoluteness, there would be paralyzed in him the indignation against wrong; there was danger that in mere thought and inaction his energies would be dissipated, that in looking and searching for an ideal he would waste his life." He was not one of those who found his work in the common walks of life, among men, in the market, in the street; what he longed for was "some external event or some inward light that would urge him into a definite line of action and compress his wandering energy." We must confess that with all the elaborateness and detail with which the character is drawn, with all the minute analysis of motive and action, which was expended in fashioning this figure of manhood, Deronda is not, as portrayed, equal to the task which he is made to consider his life's aim and mission. He is not made of the stuff out of which heroes or leaders are fashioned. He is afraid to appear exceptional, a grievous fault in one that would accomplish a great work. He has all the sympathy necessary, but not the power. He always requires a guiding hand. He is awakened to his mission in life by Mordecai. He is fashioned by the powers of this master

mind. Here, then, is a mission upon which he can concentrate his energies. Before he knows that he is a Jew he is interested by Mirah and by Mordecai. His feelings of sympathy had drawn him to the girl whom he had rescued when in distress, and through his sympathy for her he had come into contact with Mordecai. From the first he had felt interested in the consumptive Hebrew scholar and enthusiast. George Eliot certainly believed in a spiritual kinship, in a speaking of soul unto soul, for in the first meeting of Deronda and Mordecai in the bookshop the latter felt unconsciously drawn to the former; and in their later meeting, on the bridge, there is intimated an ideal relationship, a soul longing, that convinced Mordecai that this was his spiritual brother, who would carry out his desire, that their souls would join in the grand work, as Mordecai expressed it, before Deronda has learned the story of his family and his birth, "And you would have me consider it doubtful whether you were born a Jew. Have we not from the first touched each other with invisible fibers? Have we not quivered together like the leaves from a common stem, with strivings from a common root?" This intense conviction of Mordecai began to influence Deronda so that the thought of the possibility of his having been born a Jew became more and more familiar to him and more and more agreeable. It is interesting to trace the development of the Jewish

consciousness in him, which he had not at the start.

After the first interest in the Jews had been awakened in him by Mirah, he devoted much time to a subject which had never occupied him before. He had thought that "all cultured Jews had dropped their religion, and had associated them with loud wealth, or with dingy streets and back alleys." But he had never felt harshly toward them. His sympathetic nature would not permit that. He began to study their history. He grew more and more familiar with their ideal life. Mordecai's dreams seemed to have a substantial background. So imbued, so full was he of Mordecai's thought, that when he went forth to at last learn the particulars of his birth and parentage, he almost hoped that it be true that he was born a Jew, for then he felt that he would have somewhat to work for. A stronger mind had gained absolute control over him, and led him as it would. When, therefore, in answer to his mother, who explained her course, and tried to impress upon him that it was for his good that she had him raised ignorant of his Jewish parentage, he replied that he was glad he was born a Jew, it is to this influence of Mordecai, as one of the causes that we must trace this joy. The author would have it appear due to the principle of heredity, that the Jewish race instinct was so strong in Deronda that it overcame every thing else; that there was in him



an inherited longing, the effect of brooding, passionate thoughts in many ancestors. The question now arises whether any hereditary instinct—granting now for argument's sake, that there is a race instinct—is strong enough to survive all the years, the circumstances, the education, as it is represented to have done in this case. Here is Deronda, reared from his babyhood in the Christian religion, never hearing a word of Jews or Judaism until he had reached his twenty-fifth year. His surroundings, his education, his training, his companions, all were not suggestive of the slightest tinge of Jewish thought or life. He learns comparatively late, at least after the lapse of many years, that he is a Jew, and his whole being exults with joy at the fact, he bursts forth with a passionate "I am glad of it." This is scarcely natural. A point has been strained. It was not the race instinct that caused him to receive the news with pleasure. Had he never met Mordecai and Mirah, the information would not have aroused in him any such sensation, he would have agreed with his mother, that her action had been for the best. It was circumstance, and not heredity, that inspired him with his attitude toward the Jews. During his whole life he had met with commonplace people. For the first time he had seen and heard in Mordecai a genuine enthusiast. The influence grew on him; thought on the subject but increased the influ-

ence. Of this his mother knew naught, but she divined another circumstance which caused him to welcome the assurance of his Jewish birth, when she exclaimed during their last conversation, "You are in love with a Jewess." These two facts, then the wondrous influence of Mordecai's superior mind, and the sympathy of Deronda's nature, which had ripened into love for Mirah, explain and justify his satisfaction, but not the principle of heredity or race instinct, which, even if strong, would have been overcome by the power of circumstance and education, especially in a nature so readily molded, and so little self-asserting as Deronda's, even as he says, "The Christian sympathies in which my mind was reared, can never die out of me."

He has now found an ideal and an object; he is a Jew; he will assimilate Mordecai's ideas. He will be the instrument of Mordecai's will. He will identify himself as far as possible with his people, and if any work can be done for them that he can give his soul and hand to, he will do it. But we feel he will not do it. He is no enthusiast; he will do nothing. After Mordecai's guidance shall have left him, he will be as aimless as before. He will dream of the possibilities of Mordecai's visions, but he will never move definitely in any thing requiring action. He has not that strength and undaunted vigor that must actuate leaders of movements. He is a Jew because his sympathies have been aroused ;

because to one conservative in sentiment and feeling as he is, the history of the people is rich with traditions and glorious achievement; because to one sympathetic as he is, the persecutions and oppressions to which they had been subjected, appealed strongly. He lives not in the present. His thoughts are in the past, or else dreamily vague in some distant future, which shall be like the past. He is no progressist. He represents neither the thought nor the work of the Jew of the present. At the end of the book, as has been well said, "when Deronda wanders off to the East, we feel sure that he will travel about year after year, doing deeds of kindness, and cherishing noble aspirations, but further removed than even a passionate dreamer like Mordecai from working out any deliverance either for his people or for mankind." He understands not the mission of Israel, but he will contribute nothing toward a realization of even his narrow conception of it.

All these figures are drawn, as they should be in works of fiction by a strong, unprejudiced, powerful mind. The gallery of portraits upon which we have gazed—the gentle Mirah, the passionate princess, Deronda's mother, the thrifty Cohen family, the sympathetic, dreaming Deronda, show us that the correct idea has been grasped that there is no one special passion, sympathy, sentiment, feeling, desire, which is Jewish, but that all the qualities of man are in

the Jews inherent, as they are in all men. The Jew, as the Jew of the novel, "The New Prophet," Mordecai and his theories, shall now give us occasion to set forth in how far the conception of Judaism, as presented in this work, agrees with the aim and ideal of the religion.

## II.

In undertaking a study of the character of Mordecai, we feel all the difficulty there is in impartially treating so exceptional a figure. It is the man of one idea whom we have before us, and we must remember that men of one idea are either monomaniacs or geniuses. As the former, in our matter-of-fact time, Mordecai has undoubtedly appeared to some; to a few his soul seems aflame with the light of genius, but to the many he is inexplicable, and the majority of readers feel like turning over the pages and skipping the Mordecai parts of the book, or else read them from a feeling of duty. George Eliot undertook the difficult task of presenting unfamiliar ideas to the world in the novel-form. She had formed, owing, without doubt, much to her surroundings (for in England the notions concerning Judaism which she has set forth are generally held), peculiar ideas of the mission of the Jews and Judaism, and has made Mordecai the mouthpiece of her views. A writer in one of the English magazines, some years ago pointed out what is most likely the original



of Mordecai. In an introduction to a study on Spinoza, George Henry Lewes speaks of a club of which he was a member, when a young man, which met on Saturday nights for the purpose of philosophical discussions.

This club reminds one much of the Hand and Banner, of which Mordecai was a member, and where in the novel the most notable discussion on the Jews takes place. The club, like the one mentioned in the novel, was entirely informal, was composed of six, a bookseller, a journeyman watchmaker, one who lived on a moderate income, a bootmaker, a poet, and a general thinker. The original of Mordecai is undoubtedly one whom Lewes mentions as a German Jew by the name of Kohn, and whom he describes as follows, in the general lines of which description those who are at all familiar with the portrayal of Mordecai will recognize the resemblance :

“ We all admired him as a man of astonishing subtlety and logical force no less than of sweet personal worth. He remains in my memory as a type of philosophic dignity, a calm, meditative, amiable man, by trade a journeyman watchmaker, very poor, with weak eyes and chest, grave and gentle in demeanor, incorruptible even by the seductions of vanity. I habitually think of him in connection with Spinoza, almost as much on account of his personal worth, as because to him I owe my first acquaintance

with the Hebrew thinker. My admiration of him was of that enthusiastic temper which, in youth, we feel for our intellectual leaders. I loved his weak eyes and low voice. I venerated his intellect. He was the only man I did not contradict in the impatience of argument. An immense pity and fervid indignation filled me as I came away from his attic in one of the Holborn courts, where I had seen him in the pinching poverty of his home. Indignantly I railed against society, which could allow so great an intellect to withdraw itself from nobler works and waste its precious hours in mending watches. But he was wise in his resignation, thought I in my young indignation. Life was hard to him as to all of us, but he was content to earn a miserable pittance by handicraft and kept his soul serene. I learned to understand him better when I learned the story of Spinoza's life.

"Kohn, as may be supposed, early established his supremacy in our club. A magisterial intellect always makes itself felt. Even those who differed from him most widely paid involuntary homage to his power."

Mordecai is such a master mind, who follows his humble trade, getting his crust by a handicraft, like Spinoza, and "like the great transmitters (of Israel), who labored with their hands for scant bread, but preserved and enlarged the heritage of memory, and saved the soul of Israel alive, as a seed among the tombs." He is pre-

sented as a prophet of the exile, a latter-day Ezekiel, a new Hebrew poet, and appears as an illuminated type of bodily emaciation and spiritual eagerness. Weak and consumptive, but with a great soul, this Mordecai has been looking for years for one who, young, beautiful, and strong, shall carry out his ideas when he is no more, whose soul shall be joined to his soul, whose pulse shall beat with his pulse. So long had he brooded upon this that it had transformed itself into an actual fact, and he reasoned himself into it so that his "yearning for transmission had become a hope, a confident belief, which took on the intensity of expectant faith in a prophecy." He lives in another world. To the people with whom he dwells, he appears insane. They looked upon him as a "compound—workman, dominie, vessel of charity, inspired idiot, and (if the truth must be told) dangerous heretic." He is, indeed, drawn with all the attributes of psychological mystery. He is purely visionary, feeds himself on visions, for "visions are the creators and feeders of the world." He firmly believes in premonition; he is sure his friend will come. He seizes upon Deronda as the one who shall transmit his ideas; not even when he learns that Deronda is not a Jew, is his faith shaken; he knows, he feels, that he must be so; he imagines that Deronda is ignorant of his origin, and when he learns that this is true, he never for a moment doubts the end when all

shall be learned. Deronda shall be his new life, his new soul, when all this breath is breathed out. Already, in their first lengthy interview, he begins to influence Deronda; it is a case of a strong mind overpowering a weaker one. His enthusiasm is fervid, and the new friend can not withstand him. Deronda is to be to him not only a hand, but a soul, believing his belief, moved by his reason, hoping his hope, seeing the visions he points to, beholding a glory where he beholds it. Is this enthusiast a prophet or a dreamer, a genius or a madman? Deronda asks.

"Great wit to madness is allied,  
And thin partitions do their bounds divide."

This consumptive, who turned visions into overmastering impressions, and read outward facts as fulfillment—whose enthusiasm was so burning, whose faith so powerful—was he one of those monomaniacs who have found the philosopher's stone, or invented perpetual motion, or did there flame within him the light of genius, and was he unappreciated and misunderstood? So mused Deronda, and his sympathy on the one hand and faith in Mordecai on the other caused him to decide the scale in favor of Mordecai's greatness. What, then, was the idea of this pale enthusiast, what his mission? Surely, one unreal and impossible enough. It awoke in him in early years. The ideas came to him because he was a Jew. They were a trust to



fulfill, an inspiration, because he was a Jew, and felt the heart of his race beating within him. And he had dreamed upon them so long that they stood before him as a reality. The vague outlines had been filled up, and the whole structure was complete in his mind. He lived in the past, was a student and disciple of Jehudah Halevi, whose poems he made a part of himself, and none of the great poet's thoughts did he so much and so thoroughly imbibe as that of the return to Palestine—that Israel is the heart of the nations, and must once again be restored to Palestine, to be the connection between the East and the West, to be to the East what Belgium is to the West. These same ideas George Eliot repeated, in an essay published some years later, entitled: "The Modern Hep, Hep, Hep!"

A firm believer in the instinct of race and nationality, she gave full expression to her thought through Mordecai, but she did not thereby at all express the ideal of the Jews. The most interesting part of the book, as far as the Judaism is concerned, is the forty-second chapter, the discussion at the club of the Hand and Banner, the philosophical debating society mentioned above. Here Mordecai—"in English, that Isaiah might have spoken," had he used that tongue—with rushing force and overwhelming enthusiasm utters forth his ideas, for he had before him Deronda, the disciple who was to continue his work. There were present as members of the club, to

oppose him, two other Jews: Pash, who saw that the feeling of nationality was every-where dying, and Gideon, whom the author calls a "rational Jew." Mordecai looks upon the Jew as not in hearty sympathy with the people among whom he dwells. He is an alien in spirit, whatever he may be in form. He shows no patriotism. Therefore he must again have his own land and his own government. This is false doctrine. The orthodox Jews still retain the prayers for a return to Palestine in their ritual, but they are only a form. The Jews are patriotic. The records of the Revolution and the Rebellion in this country, of the Franco-Prussian war, of the struggles in Italy for unification, all offer proof of the thoroughness with which they have lived themselves into the lives of these nations, and how truly they are of and with them. Mordecai truly says that unless nationality is a feeling, what effect can it have as an idea. And the Jews have not the feeling of nationality as Jews. "A new Judea poised between East and West"—a covenant of reconciliation is the idea of an enthusiast, but not of one who has thoroughly entered into the practical side of the question. It is an exploded notion. Our times can not be compared to those of Zerubabel and Ezra, nor the Jews of now to those of then. This is the favorite comparison of those who advocate the

return. And many of these schemes of a re-possession of Palestine and a new Judea are set forth by Christian writers. They conceive this to be the yet unfulfilled mission of the Jews, if they have any. Among the Jews the Zionistic movement has laid stress of late upon this interpretation of Judaism's mission; but after all, the true mission of Judaism is not the re-establishment of a tiny state, but the realization of the prophetic ideals, the unity of God, universal peace and justice. Mordecai, however, planned it all out beautifully. The experience gained during eighteen centuries of despotism, the wealth accumulated, the knowledge and learning acquired, are all providential to conduce to the welfare of the new Jewish state. He is so full of this thought that, although he recognizes some of the difficulties, these can be swept away if the people be but willing. But they are not willing, at least not the Jews of the free countries. They have been admitted into the citizenship of states, and have assimilated to themselves the customs of their surroundings. Whatever notions of this kind may have existed in the past, they cannot be quoted in defense of the argument. Wherever light and liberty were granted the Jews the thought of a return to Palestine, although contained in the ritual, never received practical voice; it was only in the exclusion and oppression of the Ghetto, when night reigned and the

pall of thick darkness had settled upon them, that they sighed for the redemption, and hoped for a return to their land. In such times false Messiahs found among them followers sufficient, and the deluded people clung with a fervency worthy of a better cause to the demagogues who dazzled and deceived them. Such made capital out of this belief of the people. Eagerly they grasped at any hope which promised to release them from the bondage of body and soul in which they were confined. But every cause has its enthusiasts. False systems, as well as true, have had their martyrs. Idealists there are who can set as their ideal any object on which they have long enough brooded, perfectly pure and sincere in their every expression and in their every hope. Of this class of idealists is Mordecai. He is truly grand in his fervor. Even such as agree not with his thoughts will acknowledge that the novelist has given a magnificent portrayal, that shall stand, perhaps, as her greatest creation. In a hundred and one ways he gives expression to this same thought. In none clearer than in this:

"I say the effect of our separateness will not be completed and have its highest character, unless our race takes on again the character of a nationality."

The past has become his parent, the future stretches out toward him the appealing arms of children, he says. What of the present? He sees



in it a blindness that prevents the Jews from perceiving their true mission. To any but a visionary, the present would have taught another lesson, viz., that the idea of a peculiar nationality has disappeared very largely; that one aim and purpose of the Jew to-day is to preach and impress the lesson that he is peculiar only in his religion, not in his nationality; to prove by words, acts, and deeds, that Judaism is not a particularism, but a universalism; that it attaches not to special time or place, but is for all times and all places. If, then, Mordecai's conception and presentation is not in accord with that of many Jews of to-day, what is the conception that shall express their standpoint? What is Judaism, as they would have it explained by an advocate of their idea? "The most learned and liberal men among us who are attached to our religion are for cleansing our liturgy of all such notions as a literal fulfillment of the prophecies about restoration, and so on. Prune it of a few useless rites and literal interpretations of that sort, and our religion is the simplest of all religions, and forms no barrier to a union between us and the rest of the world." So says Gideon, in answer to Mordecai. There can be no doubt but that a certain amount of sentimentalism attaches to such views as Mordecai advances; they found on a noble past; they attract dreamers and visionaries; they can be set forth in beautiful, ardent words; they can even

interest poetic souls, who pour forth their plaint in glowing song; but to such as live in the present, they sound like the utterances of some medieval bard, who glorified an ideal, unreal and unattainable, in poetic strains. The conditions of life are such that religion must be somewhat more than a sentimentalism and a romanticism, that is ensconced in ancient structures, with all the surroundings of past days. Religion also, in its outward expression, is governed by the spirit of progress, and, had George Eliot introduced, as her central Jewish figure, a thinker imbued and impressed with this modern spirit, although he might not have been as interesting as this resurrected prophet of the exile, and might not have been moved by all the sentiment that Mordecai is made to represent, still would he have been more real, more flesh and blood, less visionary, more representative of modern Jewish thought, less theoretical, more practical—one who, as well as Mordecai, might have, in a manner more suited to the present, stood as a proof "of the hitherto neglected reality that Judaism is something still throbbing in human lives"—that it has the capacity to satisfy the wants of the religious conscience. How would such a one have spoken?

No less earnestly, no less fervently, he would have discoursed somewhat in this wise: From the time that the Roman legions conquered Jerusalem, and the brand hurled by the Roman

soldier fell upon the Temple and set the sacred edifice on fire, Jewish nationality has ceased. Then it was that one of the most renowned of teachers said: "One altar of God in Israel is not destroyed, one mode of atonement still exists, and that is good works; go forth and do them." And again: "No place is *eo ipso* holy; the men in it make it holy." Israel's training time was at an end. The small confines of Palestine were suited to them as a home until the great teachings of the religion had become thoroughly impressed upon the people and a portion of their very life. But now their larger mission was to begin; out among the nations, to stand firm and steadfast as the upholders of monotheism. A wonderful sentence of one of the ancient writings says: "On the day the temple was destroyed, the Messiah was born." On the day that Israel was scattered forth among the nations, its Messianic mission began.

One of its shoots would soon begin to spread some of its ideas among the nations of Europe; Christianity, the daughter of Judaism, was starting forth on its wondrous career. Six centuries later another shoot of Judaism should spread its ideas among the people of Asia and Africa. But neither of these was pure, both had borrowed heathen elements: Christianity, the tangible conception of a man-god; Mohammedanism, the pagan thought of fate, specially suited to the population among which it spread. Judaism in



its purity, the exponent of monotheism, still had its great mission, and forth went the Jews among the nations to live for their religion; to suffer, to die in the body, but never in the spirit. Through life the divine unity was the truth that upheld the Jew, before death it was the last word he uttered. Surely, if ever aught was providential, the dispersion of the Jews among the nations was. Had they all dwelt in one land what could have prevented the strong and powerful foes from exterminating them? As it was, were they persecuted in Spain, they found peace in Italy; were they massacred in Germany, they sought refuge in Poland; were they oppressed in France, they betook themselves to the land beyond the Rhine, where, perhaps, there was safety. The Jews were no longer a nation, they were a religious community, whose members were scattered here, there, every-where over the civilized world. Their enemies attempted to crush them, but they were indestructible. Their mission was but beginning; in Palestine they had been prepared for this large life, now they must live on, work on, the leaders in the grand march of humanity, toward the mount of the Eternal, the banner-bearers of the glorious truth of monotheism; and only when this truth shall be universally acknowledged, only when the mists of superstition and error that becloud the minds of men shall have cleared, and as the bright sun of truth, the acknowledgment of the Divine Unity



shall illumine the world, shall the mission of the Jews be fulfilled, and not till then. Therefore, exist they thus among all nations, not separated and yet separated; one with all among whom they dwell in every national custom, and act, in every patriotic feeling and sentiment; separate in their religion, to be distinguished by that only and nothing more.

To speak of a Jewish consciousness as a longing for a national idea and a consummation of national hope, is to give but one side of the matter; for many the Jewish consciousness is religious only. Were it not so, how could be explained the long and weary struggle for national emancipation in every land? How could be accounted for the eagerness with which every sign of the disappearance of discriminating exclusiveness was and is welcomed? A religious consciousness is theirs, which hails with joy every evidence of increasing good will among men, the removal of the barriers that hatred, superstition and oppression have erected, the gradual meeting of all in that ever enlarging space, the vantage-ground of humanity. Not the return to Palestine, not the "planting of the national ensign" (to repeat Mordecai's words), expresses Israel's Messianic hope, "but the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice and peace among all men," the realization of the prophet's word, the approach of the time when God shall be one and his name one.

Gradually, gradually, the exclusiveness of the Jew toward others and of others toward him is vanishing with other traditions, and so will it continue until in all and among all the thought of man's likeness unto man shall cause to disappear all differences, when man-made distinctions shall be lost in God-made resemblances.

Words such as these are representative of Jewish thought rather than Mordecai's strains telling of a restored national life. Dreams and visions they are, the dreams of an enthusiast who has lived only in the past; the visions of an excited brain that has fed upon the volumes of ancient lore. As dreams and as visions they appear to us, nothing more. Mordecai has been called, by an admiring critic, *Isaiah redivivus*, Isaiah living again. Yes, but Isaiah when he promised and prophesied the return, and extolled the glory of Zion, spoke but of his own days, when a people in sorrow required comfort; Isaiah living now would utter entirely different sentences. There is no people in sorrow, none longing for a return; he would have been heard in but that one glorious Isaianic strain, whose refrain is one God and one humanity.

The character of Mordecai as drawn, aside from his all-absorbing visions and theories, is in truth most beautiful. Resigned to his lot, grateful to the people so much his inferiors, with whom he lives; bound to them with an affection that, amid all their sordidness and materiality,

enabled him to be conscious of the hearts beating with kindness; his interest in the boy Jacob, toward whom "his habitual tenderness easily turned into the teacher's fatherhood," he embodies in his life what he says is the spirit of Judaism, "The spirit of our religious life is not hatred of aught but wrong." All of this, together with the quiet ecstasy with which he receives the information of the rescue of his sister; the moral uprightness, in whose presence even the ready excuses and the light-hearted wickedness of his father are dumb, causes us to feel that in this picture the great writer reached the culmination of her powers. It is her finest piece of work. She has drawn a character so ideally noble, of such grand lines, that he seems a hero, one of those loftiest ones of earth, whose thought, whose life, are all of one piece—certainly the grandest and noblest Jewish character that has been given to the world by any English novelist. To most readers he has appeared unreal, stilted, moving too much on the heights, too far removed from the common walks of life. He speaks always in visions, in ideals, and hence is too peculiar to be aught but individual.

That we differ from the opinions expressed does not prevent us from granting the meed of praise that in this great novel of George Eliot's the Jew is treated as he should be. The Jew is presented as a man; the Jewess as a woman. Neither the goodness of Mirah nor the wicked-



ness of her father are described as Jewish; the former arose from the hallowed memory of a mother's influence, the latter from a weak nature that succumbed to evil associations and fascinations. The perfection of Mordecai's character is due to the working of a noble soul with intuitions of the loftiest. Deronda, too, is such as he is, not as a Jew, but as an Englishman. Those chapters which may be designated as Jewish, are such only from the fact that they are occupied with purely Jewish questions; and the light wherein they are treated, but not that they are treated, can be the subject of criticism. We are not moved to indignation by having a wicked character drawn, nor do we feel uncomfortable by having an impossibly good figure presented as such because either is Jewish. In neither direction has the author sinned. Her noble men and women are such as developments of fine and beautiful characteristics. They are such naturally, as are also her wicked ones. Mordecai, although we may regard his visions and theories impracticable and impossible of fulfillment, is yet possibly Jewish in thought. With a certain self-training and a nourishment on medieval and ancient Jewish sentiments to the exclusion of all else, a mind of this kind can be evolved; but let it be stated again that Mordecai is not a representative of modern Jewish thought. Yet is the whole picture pathetic—the fervent soul in the weak body; the ideal in



so fragile a vessel. Such there are, living the noble lives they do, whose ideals, whether true or false, have a hallowing influence on themselves and on those whom they may immediately affect, as Mordecai did Deronda. In thinking upon the whole presentation of Mordecai, we unconsciously repeat the lines the novelist herself quotes:

"My spirit is too weak; mortality  
Weighs heavy on me like unwilling sleep,  
And each imagined pinnacle and steep  
Of godlike hardship, tells me I must die—  
Like a sick eagle looking at the sky."

## IX. ZANGWILL'S "CHILDREN OF THE GHETTO," AND OTHERS.

In the introductory chapter of this volume the statement was made that the peculiar traits and customs with the accompanying characteristic view-points of life, man and the world which had developed in Jewry during the Christian centuries of oppression and exclusion offer legitimate material for treatment by the fictionist. Reference was made to a number of German writers, such as Kompert, Bernstein, Franzos and Kohn who had pictured this life of the Ghetto in tale and story. During the years that have elapsed since this book was issued, a similar school of authors has appeared in England and America. An estimate of the work of some of these writers forms the subject of this chapter.

Easily at the head of this school stands Israel Zangwill, whose classic "The Children of the Ghetto," led the way in this line of endeavor. It is about ten years since this remarkable book that opened an unknown world to the English reading public brought into prominent notice a new writer who portrayed the lights and shades of Jewish life with such skill as betrayed a master equipped with the necessary gifts, viz.,

keen insight into the life wherewith he was concerned, adequate information concerning all the complex phases of Jewish character, sufficient knowledge of historical facts and present conditions, brilliant literary ability, epigrammatic power, and critical acumen combined with sympathetic feeling. Before attempting a more or less exhaustive presentation and estimate of Zangwill's work, it may be well to institute a brief comparison between him and the writer who up to the time of his appearance in the literary field was by common consent considered the foremost of the Ghetto novelists. I refer to Leopold Kompert. I am led to do this because such a comparison throws a strong light on different methods of treating similar themes. Kompert's tales, beautiful and touching as they are, and true to the life as far as they go, yet show only one side of the picture. Kompert lived in the days when the emancipation of the Jews from the restrictive legislation of centuries was a living issue in European political life; being eager for the realization of this program, he naturally chose for his tales only such themes as brought out the finer traits of Jewish life, its devotion, its domesticity, its religiousness, its ideals. The reader of these tales cannot but be impressed by the fact that there are so few dark spots in the life portrayed. Kompert was like the lover who sees only the beauties in his beloved. There was but little of the critic in his

mental constitution ; he does not view his subject from every point ; limpid, pure, pathetic, charming, picturesque though these etchings of a vanished existence be, and readily though we can understand and sympathize with the object of their author, still can we not but feel that he permitted himself to be circumscribed by limitations, through which if he had broken, he would have painted with a larger brush and given us a more comprehensive picture. It is here that Zangwill displays the broader outlook ; no less appreciative of the beauty, he recognizes also the ugliness ; no less conscious of the lights, he notices likewise the shadows ; he sees both sides where Kompert saw only the one side, and for that reason the portrayals of the English writer of Ghetto stories are more likely to appeal as an unbiased representation than are the tales of his Bohemian predecessor. It is this ability of Zangwill to see all sides which is possibly his most striking trait as shall be shown at greater length further on. The methods of these two masters in the portrayal of Jewish life represent two types in the treatment of their common subject ; Kompert, a path-finder in this peculiar branch of fiction, undoubtedly had his reason for the course he pursued, as has been indicated, or it may have been a matter of temperament as that other prominent Ghetto novelist, Karl Emil Franzos, claims, but there can be no doubt of the fact that Zangwill's sweep is wider



and that by viewing this life from every side he has made a distinct step in advance of Kompert, the greatest continental word painter of the life of the Ghetto.

Although Zangwill has written many short stories based upon incidents of the life in the Ghetto, yet will his fame as a Ghetto novelist rest ultimately upon the book which is the subject of our present consideration, "The Children of the Ghetto." No phase of life as it developed in the Jewish quarter and as it appears among the descendants of the inhabitants of the Ghetto, whose domicile is removed far from the squalid homes of their ancestors escapes him; all the features of Jewish life, social, communal and religious are set forth by him in masterly touches.

The book consists of two parts, the first being Ghetto sketches proper, that is, portrayals of scenes and incidents in the Ghetto itself, the second portion having for its theme the life of modern Jews and the institutions of Judaism in the England of the present day. The scene of the greater portion of the book is the so-called London Ghetto; strictly speaking, there never was a Ghetto in London in the same sense as in the countries of continental Europe; the Ghetto was the enforced dwelling-place of the Jews; mediæval legislation of the church and the state prescribed certain portions of cities and towns within whose precincts the Jews might dwell; they were forbidden to live anywhere else; this

was the official Ghetto. In this literal acceptance of the term, the English metropolis never had a Ghetto; the Jews were never confined by law to any one specified quarter; but for all that a Ghetto in fact existed there; it was a voluntary Ghetto, it is true, but the same life, the same traits, habits, customs, superstitions, hopes, ideals, appeared there as in the actual official ghettos of continental cities. In truth, the inhabitants of the London Ghetto came almost altogether from these continental Jewish quarters and merely transplanted to their new home the life of their former habitation. The exclusion to which the Jews had been subjected for centuries threw them upon their own resources, and there grew up that peculiar life of the Ghetto which only he who has sympathetic insight into and full acquaintanceship with the facts can understand. The onlooker saw merely the squalor, the pettiness, the ugliness, the repellent features of that existence; he could not look beneath the surface, where he would have found the fine virtues of domesticity, the deep respect for learning, the strong religious faith—qualities that invest with brilliancy even the most squalid life as far as externalities go. It is here that Zangwill is master. He knows his subject in its every detail. He is no mere panegyrist, as little as he is an apologist; he sees the virtues and the faults; he would not hide the latter as little as he would minimize the former; it is for this

reason that his chronicle so impresses the reader as a truthful portrayal; the men and women that appear in his pages are real men and women, with human failings and human excellencies, not figments of the imagination. The Ghetto was a "world in little;" "except for the infrequency of the more bestial types of men and women, Judea has always been a cosmos in little, and its pugilists and scientists, its philosophers and fencers, its gymnasts and money-leaders, its scholars and stock brokers, its musicians, chess players, poets, comic singers, lunatics, saints, publicans, politicians, warriors, poltroons, mathematicians, actors, foreign correspondents, have always been in the first rank. *Nihil humani alienum a se Judæus putat.*" This expression of our novelist may be taken as the basis whereon he rears his structure; it is indeed a microcosm that he analyses; the fine points he emphasizes, but the less commendable aspects he does not conceal. For example, he does not scruple to speak of the prejudices within Jewry, the animosity of class against class, Spanish Jews against German Jews, Pollak against Litvok; he alludes to the gambling spirit, notably as it showed itself in playing in the "lotteree," and in the love for a game of cards; the frequent squabbles, the "national *chutzpah*, which is variously translated enterprise, audacity, brazen impudence and cheek," and other such unpleasant traits are indicated in this composite picture,



but these are more than offset by the sympathetic portrayal of the domestic life in such touching scenes as the Friday night in Reb Shemuel's home, the beautiful intimacy between Hannah and her father, the tear-compelling incident of the Hyams' honeymoon, the fine scene between Hambourg, the aged scholar, and Strelitzki, the struggling, poverty-stricken, young idealist, the many delicate touches showing the self-sacrificing love of the Jew for his own, and his charity toward the needy, by the description of the Sabbath as making "life a conscious, voluntary sacrifice to an ideal whose reward was a touch of consecration once a week," and by the terse word of Reb Shemuel, that sums up the whole story of the Jewish home life, "the light of a true Jewish home will lead a man's footsteps back to God;" taken all in all, the faults fall far short of being very serious, while the virtues are glowing; Zangwill has drawn his scenes and characters with truthful pen; in this first volume he has steered skillfully between the Scylla of chauvinism and the Charybdis of unjustified fault-finding; therefore, he is, in a truer sense than most other writers, the portrayer of the real life of the Ghetto. What truer description of the Ghetto has ever been given than this wherewith he concludes the chapter on the celebration of the Sabbath eve in the homes of the Ghetto denizens: "All around their neighbors sought distraction in the blazing public-houses and their tipsy



bellowings resounded through the streets and mingled with the Hebrew hymns. Here and there the voice of a beaten woman rose in the air. But no Son of the Covenant was among the revelers or the wife beaters; they remained a chosen race, a peculiar people, redeemed at least from the grosser vices, a little human islet won from the waters of animalism by the genius of ancient engineers. For while the genius of the Greek or the Roman, the Egyptian or the Phœnician survives but in word and stone the Hebrew word alone was made flesh."

Naturally it is understood by the reader of the first portion of the book that the author treats of an existence that has in great part disappeared, although the emigration of thousands from Russia, Roumania and Galicia, caused by the heartless treatment of the Jews in these lands, has filled with newcomers the old Ghetto district of London that was being depopulated by removals to other sections of the city. Likewise have similar voluntary Ghettos been formed in our American cities, notably New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Boston, where the life is still much like that portrayed in Zangwill's pages. Of course, the thousands upon thousands of Jews who live among their fellow-citizens of other faiths have left the Ghetto life behind them; the complex features of the transitional stage in the existence of Jewry, such as the adjustment to the new environment, the growth

away from the cramped conditions of centuries, the accompanying changes in the interpretation of Judaism, the struggle between the old and the new, is another story, but to this, too, our author applies the keen dissecting power of his critical faculty and gives us the results of his observations of the life of those whom in quaint phrase he styles the grandchildren of the Ghetto. But first let us examine somewhat more closely the picture he has painted of the life in the Ghetto proper.

Scores of quaint customs had grown up among the Jews in the long course of their life and their travail among the peoples of the earth; some of these customs were Biblical in origin; many had been borrowed from the different Asiatic, European and African nations among whom the Jews dwelt in later times and their origin being forgotten had become incorporated into the body of Jewish observance; in the portrayal of Ghetto life these customs naturally bulk largely on the horizon. The existence of the Jew was in large part concerned with the punctilious observance of religious custom and practice; from morn till night his religion laid claim upon him; his religion was not merely for one day of the week, but every day had its religious obligations; in time this degenerated into formalism; many customs continued to be observed whose reason for existence had long since passed away; the minutiae of religious

ceremonialism often obscured the essentials of religion, but they made the religion a very present thing to the observing Jew, and therefore in our sketches the many customs and observances are referred to here, there and everywhere.

The superstitions, too, whereof the Ghetto Jew and particularly the Jewess has a full share are indicated; such as the belief in the saving power of charms and amulets, in the blighting effect of the Evil Eye, in the verification of a statement by sneezing, in the wonder-working power of the *chasid*, in the superstitions connected with death, these darker elements, too, form an integral ingredient in that strange compound, Jewish life, and cannot be left out of account if a true estimate is to be formed. Zangwill has produced a real chiaroscuro; and as in every picture of the kind, the shadows bring out the bright spots in stronger relief.

Possibly one of the most striking features in Jewish life was the prevalence of and deep respect for learning; the Jews have always been a *Culturvolk*; there was never a time, were it ever so troubled, that provision of some kind was not made for the education of the young; the learned man was the pride of the community; the history of Judaism since the fall of Jerusalem and the founding of the academies of Palestine and Babylon shortly thereafter is really the history of its scholars and thinkers; the ideal of the



Jewish community was the learned scholar, versed in the lore of the Bible, the Talmud, the philosophers, the casuists. Learning was not a trade; it was pursued and loved for its own sake. Therefore it was not unusual to find the humblest, poorest and most unlikely individuals possessed of great learning and keen dialectical powers. Throughout these pages this appears. Moses Ansell, the unsuccessful vendor of lemons, the recipient of charity, the sorry failure in the race for fortune and the good things of material life, but withal a scholar and possessed of scholarly aims, is not an exaggerated portrayal; the Ghetto had hundreds of such peddlars who were able to read the Talmud, small traders who delighted in learned discussions; nowhere else were there such characters to be found; in the Ghetto of New York a street trader who was selling soda water was found by a would-be customer so deeply immersed in a volume that he was lost to the world and had to be recalled by a vigorous exclamation to the things of this mundane sphere; the volume was found to be the Jewish philosophical classic, "The Guide of the Perplexed," by Moses Maimonides; where else but in a Jewish Ghetto would one find a street merchant studying philosophy? Nor would such a case be isolated; the desire for learning permeated Jewish life; even the most ignorant honored it; the shrewish rich Malka enter-



tained at bottom a deep respect for her poor unsuccessful kinsman Moses Ansell. In spite of the misery and untowardness of their external existence the Jews even in the Ghetto remained constant to the ideals of education and learning. The methods were often wrong, but the intention was right; the highest hope of the father for his son was that he should become a rabbi, a great light of learning in Israel; the greatest ambition of the rich man was to marry his daughter to a scholar. This idealistic strain was the saving element in the century-long misery which our author calls in his proem, "that long cruel night in Jewry which coincides with the Christian Era."

From what has been said it will have been gathered that Zangwill is endowed with the power of gazing into the very heart of things Jewish. Either in *propria persona* or by using his various characters as mouthpieces he sets forth the many varied views that are prevalent in Judaism to-day as to its aims and purposes, its significance and hopes. All shades of opinion are represented through the medium of the different characters; uncompromising orthodoxy with its rigid adherence to every dictum of the rabbinical law as codified in the *Shulchan Arukh* and the protest against this that culminated in what is known as the Reform Movement; the belief in the return to Palestine as the consummation of Judaism's hopes and the larger uni-

versalistic outlook that interprets the messianic expectation of Judaism to be not the re-establishment of the Jewish state in Palestine, but the realization of the prophetic hopes of one God and one humanity and the establishment of the reign of justice, righteousness and peace on earth; the scoffing skepticism of the unbelieving race Jew who holds nothing sacred but his own material welfare and the reverent idealism of the young collegian to whom the great story of his faith's wondrous past and the high possibility of its future appeal with mighty force; in a word, the strange complex phenomenon presented by Judaism at the close of the nineteenth century is painted with a master's brush, and of all the colors requisite for the making of the truthful picture scarcely one is wanting. Then, too, how with keen satire he exposes the shortcomings of modern Jewish life in England, whether now it be in its synagogal institutions, its social manners or its professional charities. But not only is he mordant critic of the faults of the Jews, but also positive thinker on the intent and philosophy of Judaism. In many an epigrammatic utterance he sums up in a few words the Jewish interpretation of life, as when he speaks of the "note of spiritualized common sense which has been the keynote of Judaism," and again in words of similar effect, "Judaism is so human. . . . No abstract metaphysics, but a lovable way of

living the common life sanctified by the centuries;" here one of his characters says: "The theory of Judaism has always been the spiritualization of the material," and there another speaks of the Jewish race as having "anticipated Positivism in vitalizing history by making it religion," and how the history of the Jews is illumined as by a flash in the brilliant epigram "The people of Christ has been the Christ of the peoples," or by that other utterance spoken by Strelitzki, the idealistic dreamer endowed with a prophetic soul, "to be a nation without a fatherland, but with a mother tongue, Hebrew—there is the spiritual originality, the miracle of history;" or again by the passionate exclamation of Raphael, "our mere existence since the Diaspora is a protest." Great gift indeed this to be able to subsume in such brilliant generalizations the story of centuries of endeavor and the true inwardness of the practical philosophy of Judaism.

The publication of this book and in a still greater degree its dramatization were the occasions for heated discussions *pro* and *con* as to the propriety and wisdom of producing books and plays of this kind that bring out the peculiarities of Jewish life. It is claimed that Zangwill's picture of Jewish life is unjust to the modern Jew, that the non-Jewish reader is likely to receive a wrong impression of Judaism and Jewry from these pages. I have always thought that



when Zangwill wrote the opening chapter of the second volume of his "Children of the Ghetto," entitled "The Christmas Dinner," in which the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Goldsmith discuss E. A.'s book, *Mordecai Josepfs*, he forecasted the comments on his own book in a certain section of Jewish society whose chief characteristic is a snobbish chauvinism that causes them to squirm at the memories evoked. Such naturally condemn without stint a work like this which utters many unpalatable truths; and why? Because they cannot penetrate into the heart of the author's purpose, because they cannot understand that the best advocate of a good cause is he who by contrasts makes the finer elements of that cause stand forth the more clearly, because their ear has not caught what the author seems to me to have declared to the world in those pages, in words whose purport might be as follows: "Whatever is objectionable in this strange world that I have portrayed is the result of the exclusion into which the Jew was forced during centuries of intolerance and persecution. But in spite of this exclusion and oppression, see what noble traits have been developed, strengthened and preserved, the religiosity of this people, the fidelity of its men, the chastity of its women; see the respect in which learning was held; see the generous charity of the poor towards one another, to say nothing of that of the rich; see the nobility of the domestic life;" nay, the un-



biased lover of truth cannot but feel grateful that Zangwill has preserved in these pages the characteristics of a fast vanishing life; thank God, that the enforced Ghetto has disappeared from the domains of the free nations of the earth; the voluntary Ghettos in the great cities, it is true, still continue the old life, but they, too, with the passing years, will go the way of all things earthly; the Ghetto life has affected the development of Jewish character for better or for worse; this development our author has presented with great ability and precision. His portrayal will stand ever as a real contribution to the subject, for, even though in the fictional form, it is a study drawn from the life and has all the similitude of truth.

The second volume, "The Grandchildren of the Ghetto," falls below the first. When Zangwill writes of the Ghetto life he writes as a sympathetic observer and an unbiased historical fictionist; when he writes of modern Jewish life in the so-called west end of London, he is the critic who has an eye for the faults, and can detect few, if any, virtues; the Jew of the past (for that is what the Ghetto Jew practically is) he writes of *con amore*; the Jew of the present he sees through a glass critically. Without doubt there is much to criticise and find fault with in the management of the public, religious and charitable institutions, without doubt in adjusting themselves to the changed conditions

subsequent to the removal from the Ghetto the Jews have fallen short of satisfying the demands of the highest life, without doubt the innuendos of Esther and the passionate outbursts of Strelitzki on the lack of the true religious spirit among English Jews are justified by many facts in the case, but yet the reader of this second volume cannot but feel that the author has changed his base appreciably; he is evidently out of all sympathy with present day Judaism in England; if it has any good points (and some it certainly has), he will not see them; we feel ourselves rather in the company of Zangwill, the critic, than in that of Zangwill, the novelist. When he returns with Esther to the Ghetto, the old spell begins to work again and the geniality of treatment that constitutes the charm of the first volume reappears. Still with it all, we close the book with the feeling that dissatisfied as the author is with the conditions in Jewish life in London of to-day, yet he sees hope in the future; the transitional period with its Henry Goldsmiths, its Sydney Grahams, its Percy Savilles, its Leonard James, is a necessary incident in the wondrous tale of Jewish life; but Judaism has always had its saving remnant, enthusiasts like Raphael Leon, idealists like Strelitzki, self-sacrificing hearts like Esther Ansell, the re-found Esther; the critic of the present turns into the dreamer of the future and in the last chapter of the book, at the close of the realistic descrip-

tion of the service on the day of atonement there occurs that eloquent burst which we cannot but feel expresses the author's own attitude and is significant of his own feeling. I may well set down the passage here; the service of the long day had drawn to its close; the declaration of the unity of God had been spoken "and then in the brief instant while the congregation with ever increasing rhapsody, blessed God till the climax came with the seven-fold declaration, 'The Lord he is God,' the whole history of her strange unhappy race flashed through her mind in a whirl of resistless emotion. She was overwhelmed by the thought of its sons in every corner of the earth proclaiming to the somber twilight sky the belief for which its generations had lived and died—the Jews of Russia sobbing it forth in their pale of enclosure, the Jews of Morocco in their *mellah*, and of South Africa in their tents by the diamond mines; the Jews of the New World in great free cities, in Canadian backwoods, in South American savannahs; the Australian Jews in the sheep-farms and the gold-fields and in the mushroom cities; the Jews of Asia in their reeking quarters begirt by barbarian populations. . . . The grey dusk palpitated with floating shapes of prophets and martyrs, scholars and sages and poets full of yearning love and pity, lifting hands of benediction. By what great high-roads and queer by-ways of history had they traveled hither, these



wandering Jews, sated with contempt, these shrewd, eager fanatics, these sensual ascetics, these human paradoxes, adaptive to every environment, energizing in every field of activity, omnipresent like some great natural force, indestructible and almost inconvertible, surviving with the immovable optimism that overlay all their poetic sadness—Babylon and Carthage, Greece and Rome; involuntarily financing the Crusades, overthrowing the inquisition, illusive of all baits, unshaken by all persecutions, at once the greatest and meanest of races? Had the Jew come so far only to break down at last, sinking in morasses of modern doubt, and irresistibly dragging down with him the Christian and the Moslem; or was he yet fated to outlast them both, in continuous testimony to a hand molding incomprehensibly the life of humanity? Would Israel develop into the sacred phalanx, the nobler brotherhood that Raphael Leon had dreamed of, or would the race that had first proclaimed—through Moses for the ancient world, through Spinoza for the modern—

‘One God, one Law, one Element,’

become in the larger, wilder dream of the Russian idealist, the main factor in

‘One far-off divine event  
To which the whole Creation moves?’

“The roar dwindled to a solemn silence, as



though in answer to her questionings. Then the ram's horn shrilled—a stern, long drawn-out note, that rose at last into a mighty peal of sacred jubilation. The atonement was complete.”

By this work then Zangwill has won for himself a place in the foremost rank of the Ghetto novelists, yes, I do not hesitate to say, the first place; he is an artist of consummate ability and as an artist has drawn a picture that shall live long after the time when the peculiar life that he has pictured shall have disappeared altogether from the earth. That life was the outcome of persecution; with the advance of freedom the complexion of Jewish life changes; in the free countries of the world the Jew is no longer a being apart politically; in the habits of life he is like his neighbors of other faiths; religiously alone is he different; it is a far cry from the Ghetto Jew of Zangwill's pages to the Jew of America's reform congregations; our novelist has performed a notable service for the history of Jewish culture by casting in a fixed form this disappearing life and by interpreting in so sympathetic a spirit its many-sidedness. But this was only the beginning of endeavor in this field of literary effort. Besides this longer work our author has from time to time given to the world short stories and sketches of that same life, to a brief consideration of some of which I now turn.

The year following the appearance of the "Children of the Ghetto" witnessed the publication of a little volume containing four short stories entitled "Ghetto Tragedies." These are, indeed, remarkable specimens of the storyteller's art. The first two, "Satan Mekatrig" and "The Diary of a Meshumad," are psychological studies of a high order, the former being a presentation of the making of an unbeliever through the influence of the spirit of doubt and mocking skepticism and the final conquest of this spirit by the persisting influences of early training and inherited faith, and the latter setting forth the whole gamut of emotions through which an apostate from Judaism passes owing to the subtle influences of memory and re-awakened attachment to the faith of his fathers that come upon him towards the end of his life. In its way this story is as strong as anything in the language. The situations are tragic. The action moves with all the rapidity of a drama of avenging fate. The horror of the situation lies in the fact that the apostate's son who has been reared in the orthodox Greek Church, and has, of course, no knowledge of his father's Jewish origin, is a bigoted Greek Catholic and becomes the editor of the most virulent anti-Semitic newspaper in Russia; it is the son's articles that incite the Russian mobs to violence and to attacks on the Jewish quarters, and the poignant agony through which the father who has returned

secretly to his people passes, is portrayed in burning touches that lay bare the innermost secrets of a tortured soul. In this story, too, Zangwill displays his great power of objective presentation; the arguments of the enemies of the Jews are placed in the mouth of the Paul, the anti-Semitic son, and the defense of the persecuted people is uttered by the apostate who pretends, however, to take this position merely for argument's sake, as he does not dare reveal the truth to his son.

Not all apostates are like this, however, and to complete the picture, the author introduces the figure of another Jew by birth, the physician, Nicholas Alexandrovitch, who has no such qualms of conscience and mocks at the re-awakened memories and longings of the central character of the story. The *meshumad* is not to be diverted, however. His heart longs for his people and his faith, "the simple, sublime faith of my people." It draws him like a magnet. In direct, powerful strokes the diary hurries us on to the climax, the murderous attack on the Jewish quarter of Odessa where the *meshumad* has taken refuge. The story closes with an account of the oncoming of the mob, "Great God! They have knives and guns and their leader is flourishing a newspaper and shouting out something from it. There are soldiers among them and sailors, native and foreign, and mad mushiks. Where are the police? . . .



The mob is passing under my window. *God pity me, it is Paul's words they are shouting.* They have passed. No one thinks of me. Thank God, I am safe. I am safe from these demons. What a narrow escape! Ah, God, they have captured Rabbi Isaac and are dragging him along by his white beard towards the barracks. My place is by his side. I will rouse my brethren. We will turn on these dogs and rend them. Proshchai, my beloved diary, farewell. I go to proclaim the Unity."

The closing story of this collection, "The Sabbath Breaker," consisting of but a few pages, is a veritable gem; it is the very perfection of the art of story writing; it is a classic, worthy of a place among the highest products of the fictionist's skill. The tale of a mother's devotion has never been more beautifully told. In the apt figure of the Biblical sage, it may, indeed, be spoken of as "an apple of gold in a setting of silver."

In the "Dreamers of the Ghetto," Zangwill has reached the high-water mark of his art. Although not fiction in the strict sense of the term, yet the most of these sketches are cast in the fictional form, and hence, even if based on historical happenings, they may be included properly in the estimation of our author as an imaginative delineator of Jewish themes. Nowhere does Zangwill's genius shine more brilliantly than here. Taking striking and roman-



tic incidents from Jewish history as his subjects, he sets forth through this medium the wondrous story of Jewish effort, fault and aspiration; as in the tales we have already considered, we find him here also in the guise of the truth-seeker; traits admirable and qualities reprehensible he portrays with unprejudiced candor; his is the objective standpoint, blinded neither by prejudice to merit nor by partisanship to fault; in a word, he is the artist above all things, and the artist, to be worthy of his calling, must be able to view his subject from every side and produce the composite picture that shall contain in solution all the elements; as he himself says: "This book was written for the world, for Christian and Jew alike. The artist, as artist, is of all parties and none; he is touched by the beauty, the pathos, the tragedy, the wonder of all creation. He must stand alone; for him union is weakness. But because he is of no sect, his vision may be of help to all sects, his search for truth from his lonely watch-tower may haply reveal what both partisan and antagonist may miss."

Although the book is composed of many sketches, detailing incidents extending over centuries of striving from the sixteenth to the nineteenth and laid in widely separated localities, Venice and Rome, Amsterdam and Smyrna, Galicia and Germany, London and Jerusalem, yet is the one purpose running through the

book made plain from the choice of subjects, this purpose being the search for a reconciling element between the conflicting tendencies in the human spirit, that discord between the stern demands of righteousness on the one hand and the passionate longing for beauty on the other, or, to use a phrase now much in vogue, the discord of Hebraism and Hellenism. These conflicts of soul are presented in varying guises, of which I may mention the opening sketch, "The Child of the Ghetto," and the closing tale, "Chad Gadya," a modernized version of Ecclesiastes, which, having as its central character the child of the opening tale, now grown into a world-weary youth, gives a unity to the book; "Joseph the Dreamer," poor victim caught between the upper millstone of his own blindness to the inner significance of his inherited faith and the nether millstone of man's intolerance and therefore crushed to death; "Uriel Acosta," representing another phase of the conflict; "The Maker of Lenses," luminous study of Spinoza; "Maimon the Fool and Nathan the Wise," types of differing tendencies in eighteenth century Judaism; the striking essay on Heine, "From the Mattress Grave," a *tour de force* quite as unique and ingenuous as anything in the language; "The Master of the Name," unusual conglomerate of superstition and aspiration; "The Conciliator of Christendom," pathetic picture of the tragical fate of the world-

improver; and notably also the epilogue, "A Modern Scribe in Jerusalem," and the appendix, "The Address to the American Jew," in both of which the author appears in *propria persona*; conflicts between dreams and realities, strange spirit wrestlings, tragedies of the idealist, great themes sympathetically treated; our author here finds himself in congenial company, for he too is one of the dreamers of the Ghetto, as late developments in his life have proved. In the sketch, "A Modern Scribe in Jerusalem," the scribe suggests a solution of this eternal conflict that has been so strikingly illustrated in the inner contentions within Judaism in the nineteenth century. Since this sketch is presented in the form of epilogue to the book, we are justified in considering the standpoint of the scribe the author's own; the words to which I refer are as follows: "The time had now come for a new religious expression, a new language for the old everlasting emotions, in terms of the modern cosmos; a religion that should contradict no fact and check no inquiry: so that children should grow up with no distracting divorce from their parents and their past, with no break in the sanctities of childhood, which carry on to old age something of the freshness of early sensation, and are a fount of tears in the desert of life. The ever-living, darkly laboring Hebraic spirit of love and righteous aspirations, the Holy Ghost that had inspired Judaism and



Christianity and moved equally in Mohammedism and Protestantism, must now quicken and inform the new learning, which still lay dead and foreign outside humanity. . . . The animality of average humanity made for hope rather than despair, when one remembered from what it had developed. It was for man in this laboring cosmos to unite himself with the stream that made for goodness and beauty. A song came to him of the true God, whose name is one with Past, Present and Future."

As to the question whether Zangwill gives a true interpretation of the interesting episodes from Jewish history that he depicts, I believe there can be but one answer. Although he takes some liberties, notably in the Spinoza sketch as he himself says in his preface, yet with the sure touch of genius, he has grasped the salient points and set them forth clearly, sanely, objectively. He is as a usual thing so exact in his historical facts and references that it is strange that he makes the mistake of speaking of the author of the *Shulchan Arukh* as Benjamin instead of Joseph Caro in his tale about The Turkish Messiah. The appendix to the book, entitled "To the American Jew," being fact and not fiction, is in many ways the most interesting chapter since it brings the problem down to our own day and gives the author's own views on moot points in modern Jewish life. In his own brilliant way he sums up in an



epigram the alternatives of Jewish aspiration represented on the one hand by the Zionistic movement and on the other by the reform movement when he says "either a common country or a common idea." He does not permit his own sympathies with Zionism to obscure his vision; he presents both sides fairly and without prejudice, and here again he shows himself the true artist. He states the conflict, he presents the problem; the future will have to give the answer. We who believe that the mission of Judaism lies in the universal spiritual ideal of the prophets and not in a resurrected Jewish state, being thus opposed unalterably to the political Zionists with whom our author has openly allied himself recently, cannot, despite the differences of thought that here divide us, but be appreciative of the lucid presentation of the vexed Jewish question that is given us here by our foremost *litterateur*.

A number of other Jewish writers of more or less power have followed in Zangwill's footsteps and turned to the Ghetto for material for stories. Many there are who regard this tendency with dread, notably that large class of Jewish chauvinists to whom I have referred already and who wish every mention of the Ghetto and all that it implies and indicates buried far out of sight. It is interesting to note that this attitude of mind dates back to the time of the appearance of the very first Ghetto novel, Heine's wonderful

fragment, "Der Rabbi von Bacharach." A writer in the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, in the year 1840, attacked this sketch of Jewish life viciously and adduced the same arguments as do the latter-day critics of the modern Ghetto novelists; his cry was to let the dead past bury its dead; he asked of what benefit is it to dwell upon a phase of life that is outgrown; with this attitude the unbiased student of human institutions can have but little sympathy; for good or for ill the centuries of life in the Ghetto have affected the development of Jewish character, and the truthful presentation of that development is certainly legitimate not only for the historian, but for the fictionist. The only question to be considered is whether the picture drawn leaves a true or a false impression. At some length I have attempted to answer this question as far as the leading Ghetto novelist in English literature is concerned, and I turn now to a similar though necessarily briefer consideration of the other contemporary writers who are working that same vein. First in order of time and for that matter of ability after Zangwill is Samuel Gordon, the author of two volumes of short Ghetto stories, "A Handful of Exotics" and "The Daughters of Shem," and a lengthy novel, "The Sons of the Covenant." Gordon writes with a sympathetic pen; the sad side of the Jewish *misère* through the centuries appeals to him most strongly, and in his two volumes of short stories it is the tear-

compelling features of the life of the Ghetto that he pictures with all that accuracy which intimate knowledge alone can give; although his stories for the most part are to be characterized as being graceful rather than powerful, yet in some of these sketches he evinces great strength, and rises to a splendid height of tragical force, as in the tales, "The Alien Immigrant," "Out of the Land of Bondage," "Whose Judgment is Justice," "To the Glory of God," and "The Ambush of Conscience." He is well equipped for his task; the mention throughout of the customs, habits and superstitions of the Ghetto betray his undoubted familiarity with the life he portrays; this being true, it is strange that in the English rendition of the traditional marriage formula in the story, "The Ambush of Conscience," he makes so strange a slip as to include the words, "as a wife," when the Hebrew really is, "Be thou consecrated to me by this ring according to the Law of Moses and Israel;" also, that, influenced by the conception of the Pharisees current in the Christian world, he should make a statement to this effect, "they were *chassidim* whose prototypes were the Pharisees of old, and who believe in a religion made up of long caftans, broad waist girdles and love locks, and generally play antics with the grand old faith of Sinai;" although it is true that even the Talmud denounces certain classes of Pharisees, yet is the usual identification of Pharisaism with

religious hypocrisy, the result of New Testament teaching, unjust to the real significance of the teachings of that great party in ancient Israel, and to identify that degenerate religious movement, Chassidism, with Pharisaism, is to go wide of the mark. I cannot but consider it a mistake both on the part of the writer under present consideration and of Zangwill to translate into English typical Ghetto terms which were always spoken in Hebrew or jargon; the forcefulness of expressions like *am haaretz*, *aziz ponim* and the like is lost altogether in their English dress, "man of the earth" (which by the way is a wrong rendering), "impudence face;" they should be given in their original form and explained in a glossary; the same is certainly the case with such terms as *Kaddish*, *Arba Kanfoth*, *Zeeno ureenoh*; to the initiated they are perfectly intelligible; in their English version, the Sanctification, Four Corner Garments, The Go and See Book, they are intelligible neither to the initiated (except by an effort) nor to the uninitiated; hence, all such typical expressions should be left as they were uttered by the people in the Ghetto.

Gordon understands the Jewish character well, as is apparent throughout his stories. Let me quote but a few expressions which indicate this clearly. How well he sums up the whole story of the steadfastness of centuries in the face of persecution when he makes an old man appeal as



follows to the ruffians who wish to force him to eat leavened bread in the Passover, during an attack by the mob on the Jewish quarter, "Have mercy on me! kill me! but do not make me transgress the commandment!" and how keen an insight into the habit of mind of the Russian Jew he shows in his remark about "the faculty of yielding to circumstances which is at once the vice and the virtue of the co-religionists he had left behind in the Pale of settlement;" the attitude of resignation of the pious Jew under the visitation of dread calamity appears from the uncomplaining acceptance of misfortune by the poor stricken mother in the powerful tale, "Whose Judgment is Justice;" a young woman has lost her babe and cannot be comforted; her tears flow without ceasing; the old grandmother who has lost all her children under the most harrowing circumstances relates the manner of their taking off, and as the young woman hears this tale of supreme woe, her own trouble seems trivial, "truly, it is said, that a small grief melts away in the telling of a greater;" the resignation of the Jewess finds expression in the words, "I begrudge thee not thy tears! but lest thou shouldst arraign Heaven and thereby bring sin upon thy head, I would have thee remember that whomsoever God loves He chastises. And he has loved me very much;" the great respect for learning shown by Anshel Markovitz, the rich shopkeeper in the tale "The Daughters of

Shem," and his desire to ally himself with a learned family by the marriage of his daughter Zillah to Enoch Gontaller, the son of the renowned Rabbi Talmudist and himself a young man of brilliant attainments, reflect truthfully the sentiment of the Jew of the time and environment described; in introducing the young man to his daughter he says simply, "Zillah, this is Enoch Gontaller. When you were yet in your cradle his father's name had already traveled to the four corners of the world. It is a name to be proud of, and the son is worthy of his father; need I say more?" And how well the author has grasped the high aspirations of Jewish thought is apparent from passages such as that containing the exhortation of the teacher to the wayward boy Aaron in the story "The Conquest of Aaron Pittrick," "Aaron, have you forgotten that God has made us a nation of priests? He has driven us out of our land so that we might make the whole world His altar—a sanctuary where we are to teach ourselves and our brothers to offer sacrifice. And what are we to offer up? Not our love, our abnegation, our truth, these we are to keep for ourselves; but we are to render up our hatreds, our evil passions, our falsehoods, because God is a great Magician and can make metal out of dross and ornaments out of abominations. And that is what we learn from our high traditions, from the examples of our great men, and that is why

I would have you study their words night and day, till you have caught the echo of their loud-uttered testimony. A nation of priests are we to be, and there shall be no falsehood and hatred amongst us."

The two tales, "Toward the Sunrise" and "On the Road to Zion," present the two aspects of the Zionist movement, the former the enthusiasm of its devoted adherents, the latter its impracticability; the closing tale in the volume "The Daughters of Shem," entitled "The Leader," is an excellent little study of various tendencies among modern Jews, the laxity of the rich race Jew and the compelling power of the Jewish heritage.

Gordon's next venture in this field was his novel "The Sons of the Covenant; a Tale of London Jewry." This story of the development of the two brothers, Philip and Leuw Lipcott, has all the better characteristics of the shorter tales already considered; that same note of intelligent sympathy is struck here and the same evidence given of full familiarity with the life and experiences detailed; but our author has grown in the power of presentation and has produced a charming tale whose prevailing note is the devotion of brother and friend; the better side of human nature is kept ever to the fore; the author sees his fellow-men through kindly glasses. The purpose of the novel, in as far as it has a purpose beyond the development of



the characters and the love-story, is the setting forth of Philip's scheme for the uplifting of the inhabitants of the Ghetto out of their misery and degradation to a higher plane; that an institute planned along the lines suggested will do much toward making the lives of such as may be brought within the radius of its influence fuller, better and fairer, and will in great part solve the perplexing problems arising from the poverty and the congestion of the Ghetto, there can be little doubt, for the Toynbee Halls and the Hull Houses, foundations in England and America of similar tendencies to the imaginary institute of our tale have done untold good; whether the suggestion in Mr. Gordon's novel will find realization as did Walter Besant's similar scheme in "All Sorts and Conditions of Men" remains to be seen; at any rate he has spoken a noble word and spoken it well. The particularly touching portion of the book is the relation between Leuw and Old Christopher, the Jewish youth and the Christian old man; there is a kinship of human nature that draws true hearts together despite the differences of sect, race and age.

As Zangwill and Gordon find their subject-matter in the London Ghetto, so Abraham Cahan exploits the New York Ghetto for material for his stories of which he has published two volumes, "Yekl" and "The Imported Bridegroom and Other Stories" It is a very unlovely



picture that he paints in the former volume; sordidness, squalor, wretchedness, permeate the pages; human nature at its worst and meanest is laid bare; it cannot be denied that Cahan possesses a certain strength, and if his object was to present the life wherewith he deals in all its ugliness and unsavoriness, he has succeeded; none of the romance of the Ghetto here that breathes in Zangwill's and Gordons pages; if there was any beauty at all in the old life of the Jews within the Ghetto walls, there is certainly none in this latest of the Ghettos of the world, the congested, swarming, filthy district in the East Side of the American metropolis; the transplanted Russian Jew as he appears in these pages has assumed all the objectionable traits of the lower element of the American population in whose midst he dwells; but yet in spite of the horror which cannot but fill one at the life here portrayed, a feeling of pity comes over the reader for these wretched creatures who, victims of tyranny and persecution in their old home, have found in their new home beyond the seas but want and misery. Let him who prates of the wealth of the Jew spend but a day among the denizens of this wretched district and he will learn to his amazement that there are tens of thousands of this people living in a state of poverty and misery the like of which not the wildest flights of fancy have pictured. For one Jewish Dives there are an hundred Lazarus; sta-

tistics prove the Jews to be the poorest community in the world.

It was inevitable that the New York Ghetto would furnish some writer or writers subjects for tales. The local color that the modern author is always in search of is too pronounced to have escaped the seeker. It is a peculiar life and comes well within the province of the fictionist. If the question be asked *cui bono?* the only answer that can be returned is that into the true view of the story-teller's function this question does not enter; the fictionist is not a moralist; the only consideration is whether his portrayal is faithful to the life; Cahan is *au fait* with his subject; he knows the people with whom he is concerned. No fair products can be expected to grow out of a plague-infected spot, and the New York Ghetto is nothing short of this; the struggle for mere existence is a fierce battle with outrageous fortune; little wonder that many of the swarming thousands huddled in the noisome tenements become almost dehumanized; little wonder that the student of sociology and the kindly philanthropist stagger at the problem here presented; the Ghetto of New York and in a lesser degree the Ghettos of the other large American cities are the sore spots in American Jewish life; the picture that Cahan has given of the New York Ghetto is not overdrawn; "it (the New York Ghetto) is one of the most densely populated spots on the face

of the earth—a seething human sea fed by streams, streamlets and rills of immigration flowing from all the Yiddish-speaking centers of Europe. Hardly a block but shelters Jews from every nook and corner of Russia, Poland, Galicia, Hungary, Roumania; Lithuanian Jews, Volhynian Jews, south Russian Jews, Bessarabian Jews; Jews crowded out of the pale of Jewish settlement; Russified Jews expelled from Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kieff or Saratoff; Jewish runaways from justice; Jewish refugees from crying political and economical injustice; people torn from a hard-gained foothold in life and from deep-rooted attachments by the caprice of intolerance or the wiles of demagoguery, innocent scapegoats of a guilty government for its outraged populace to misspend its blind fury upon, students shut out of the Russian universities and come to these shores in quest of learning, artisans, merchants, teachers, rabbis, artists, beggars—all come in search of fortune. Nor is there a tenement house but harbors in its bosom specimens of all the whimsical metamorphoses wrought upon the children of Israel of the great exodus by the vicissitudes of life in this their promised land of to-day. You find there Jews born to plenty whom the new conditions have delivered up to the clutches of penury; Jews reared in the straits of need who have here risen to prosperity; good people morally degraded in the struggle for suc-

cess amid an unwonted environment; moral outcasts lifted from the mire, purified and imbued with self-respect; educated men and women with their intellectual polish tarnished in the inclement weather of adversity; ignorant sons of toil grown enlightened—in fine, people with all sorts of antecedents, tastes, habits, inclinations, and speaking all sorts of sub-dialects of the same jargon, thrown pell-mell into one social caldron—a human hodge-podge with its component parts changed but not yet formed into one homogeneous whole."

As for the tale of "Yekl" itself, there is but little in commendation that can be said of it; "Yekl," or "Jake," according to the Americanized version of his original name, is an uncouth young emigrant versed in the lingo of the prize-fight ring, a worshiper at the shrine of the champion bruiser John L. Sullivan, a frequenter of dance halls, a sort of Ghetto "tough;" the other characters of the book are not much more delectable; there are but few bright spots in the picture; Cahan, both in this longer story and in a number of short tales that have appeared in magazines now and then, has made it a point to show the inhabitants of the Ghetto in a repulsive guise; his sketches are relieved by scarcely a glimpse of nobler characteristics; he is the realist among writers of Ghetto tales, using this term in its popularly accepted meaning as designating that school of writers that delve into the purlieus



of human life and spread their literary harpy-feast before the eyes of the world.

True as this statement is as applied to some stories of Cahan yet must it be modified in reference to the bound volume of tales from the pen of our author, "The Imported Bridegroom and Other Stories;" although dealing with the same subject and delineating the same life, there is here a broader outlook, a more comprehensive grasp, a finer touch; the two stories, "A Sweat Shop Romance" and "A Ghetto Wedding," though laid in sordid surroundings and showing the wretchedness of the Ghetto life with all its cramped poverty, yet are invested with the transforming artistic spirit that one misses in the "realistic" tales just referred to; the story "Circumstances" evinces real power; it brings out the tragedy of the life of the young Russian Jew of high aspiration and advanced education driven from his home and forced to engage in the most distasteful occupations in the American Ghetto to gain a mere livelihood; the pitiful struggle with grinding poverty, the gradual relinquishment of the high ideals, the sacrifice of a fine mind to the Moloch of toil for physical sustenance, the overwhelming sadness of it all are told graphically; full is the New York Ghetto of these individual tragedies; the land of promise has become in but too many cases the land of disappointment and despair. The longer story that gives the name to the volume is an excel-

lent portrayal of the effect of the culture and learning of the larger world upon the Jew of Talmudical training and keen dialectical reasoning power; to him who can peer beneath the surface there is disclosed here the secret of many a Jew's power to rise above adverse circumstances and make his way in the world. In the tales of this volume our author has made a decided advance; his pictures are more rounded; he sets forth well the effect of the American environment upon the immigrants, and produces some *genre* pictures which betray true artistic capabilities.

The latest aspirant for recognition in this field is an American Jewess, Martha Wolfenstein; her book, "Idylls of the Gass," published recently, is a collection of short tales, whose hero is the little "wonder child," Shimmele; his experiences in the home and under the tutelary protection of the shrewd and kindly old grandmother, Maryam, are set forth with loving warmth and in a delightful manner. Miss Wolfenstein has caught the spirit of the finer side of the Ghetto life remarkably well; she draws the pictures with sympathetic pencil; she loves the life passed there; but she sees only its poetry and romance; she closes her eyes to its wretchedness and misery; the kindly interest, the charitable concern, the religiosity, the domestic constancy, the filial devotion, the hospitality to the stranger, the respect for learning,

the uncomplaining piety, the homely wisdom, the keen mother-wit, all these beautiful traits of the inhabitants of the Ghetto are delineated with skillful strokes; the femininity of the author, the gentle-hearted Jewish woman, is apparent on every page; even in the descriptions of the horrors of persecution it is this gentler note that sounds. All the restrictions of the Ghetto, the narrowness of view, the exclusion from the larger life, are kept in the background; after all, this is the danger of the Jewish romanticism that the writers of the Ghetto stories do so much to arouse and foster; in spite of all the poetic beauty that the Ghetto novelists weave into the life they portray, we may not forget the other side; modern Jewish life may seem to lack much of the romance of the Ghetto, but for all that its freedom outweighs beyond calculation all the beauty that the romancer reads into the Ghettoism over which he casts fancy's glamour; let the reader beware lest under the witchery of his influence we lose the true perspective; the Ghetto is in great part a thing of the past, and happily so; whether it be a street, a quarter, or a section, it is the synonym for restricted development, and poetize it as much as one will, it remains the Ghetto after all. Miss Wolfenstein loves her "gass;" the heart often clings to a cherished possession though the reason declares against it; Shimmele is a splendid creation, and Maryam a truly wise woman, like unto whom

there were many, mothers in Israel indeed, whose keen knowledge of human nature, homely wisdom and heart of gold brightened all of life. The book contains many deft touches; thus, for example, in speaking of the piety and trustful faith of the inhabitants of the Ghetto, the author says finely: "They were for the most part poor and struggling, bent with care and labor, stamped with the indellible mark of helpless, patient suffering; yet they left their beds at dead of night and hurried to the synagogue to weep penitently over their sins and thank the Lord God of Israel for His boundless mercies." The dogged persistence of the Jew is brought out well in the scene between Shimmele and his tormentors, Christian boys of his own age; with all the refinement of cruelty that frequently marks boys, his chief tormentor has forced the little lad to do his bidding in a number of instances, and finally he has the wondrous inspiration to make the Jew boy cross himself; "'Cross thyself! make the cross, Jew!' they shouted in chorus. But the artist had reckoned only with Shimmele and not with centuries of his ancestors. These now came strangely into play. Shimmele's jaw had become rigid as iron. The blood was back in his face and his eyes blazed fearlessly into his tormentors', glowing eloquently with deep and utter contempt. 'Cross thyself!' he roared again and again, pummeling Shimmele the while in his rage, but the blood of



Shimmele's martyred ancestry boiled in his veins, and had they then and there hacked him to pieces he would not have made the sign of the cross." One of the best features of Jewish life was the spirit of helpfulness, notably in cases of need; charity was bred in the bone, and the phrase "the Jewish heart" was coined to express this; the Ghetto had a number of institutions for the relief of the self-respecting poor, one of which the Burial Society affords our author the occasion for a little homily which is well worth reproducing: "I would that our modern charity organizations might have had a lesson of the Burial Society in the Gass. I would that our tender-hearted committees who line up the poor like cattle and brand them before the face of man—I would that they might have studied the methods of the Burial Society in the Gass. And our teachers, those honored makers of the nation, who cry without a tremor, 'All children who are too poor to buy books please rise!'—the little ones pale and tremble, and often the pain draws such bitter tears—would that they might have learnt the tenderness of the Burial Society in the Gass."

"When a death occurs there, whether in the house of the rich or the poor, the society sends two locked boxes to the bereaved. One contains the funds of the society, the other is empty. The fund must then be transferred

from one box to the other, and in the process one may add to it or take from it or leave it intact. The boxes are then returned locked, and no one knows or can know who has made a donation or who has a charity funeral."

The book ends appropriately with little Shimmele intoning the morning prayer after the night of carnage and murder in the Ghetto; the action of the child typifies the faith of the Jew of the Ghetto; despite persecution, despite wretchedness, despite the world's hatred and contumely, he never lost hope nor ever relinquished his trust in his God, and like the "wonder child" of these pages he prayed day after day, in sunshine and storm, in happiness and gloom, the traditional opening words of his daily morning devotions, "The Lord of the Universe—He it is who reigned before any being was created, He is one and there is none beside. The Lord is my living Redeemer, my Rock in the time of affliction. Into His hands I commit my spirit. God is with me, I shall not fear."

I have passed in review many imaginary portraits. The fiction whose inspiration is the life of the Ghetto has assumed a well-defined place in the literary life of the period. It is really historical fiction, for even such Ghettos as still exist are remnants of the past lingering in the present. The fervent hope of all friends of humanity is that they may ere long vanish from

the face of the earth everywhere, and thus the sad story of Jewish repression whereof the Ghetto has been the symbol may be ended. As I stated in the opening lines of this chapter, I believe the function of the Ghetto novelist to be legitimate, but that which is to be regretted is the tendency that has shown itself quite recently on the part of some of the representatives of this school, to exploit the Ghetto for bizarre themes and to publish stories which do not in any way reflect the life of the Ghetto as such, but seem to be written with the mere purpose of producing a sensational story and giving it a Ghetto label. This reprehensible proceeding cannot be condemned too strongly. Another point must also be touched in this connection. The Ghetto, the Jewish misery and the Ghetto novel have been so much in evidence during the past ten years that the fact that they are not all of Jewish life and literature is sometimes likely to be forgotten. They represent the hand of the dead past still resting on the present, but during the last century the Jews have been making brave and determined efforts to shake off this hand. And who will say that they have not succeeded in the lands in which legislation has removed the barbarities of the centuries? The Ghetto is only an incident in Jewish history and the Ghetto novel only a small branch of Jewish literary activity.

The Jew of the present day knows that he is

bound by an hundred ties to the past, but he has outgrown that past; with freedom has come the larger outlook; the unquenchable optimism, the homely virtues, the beautiful faith of his fathers of the Ghetto, are a precious undying heritage, but strange customs and peculiarities that have outlived their meaning and usefulness he has sloughed. In the Ghetto novel that is true to the life he sees a picture of that past existence with all that it implies; he thanks his God that the light of freedom is shining brightly in many lands, and he prays that where the darkness of oppression still broods this light may soon penetrate; in spite of many untoward appearances that seem to indicate reaction, he will not lose hope that the age of Ghettoism is really past, and that where this still lingers it must give way to the increasing purpose that runs through the ages, for the high hopes of the prophets of the human race shall not be disappointed, and the day shall dawn when hatred and oppression shall be no more, and justice, love and peace shall rule among men.





# **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

## **OF**

### **JEWISH LIFE IN ENGLISH FICTION**

COMPILED BY

**MISS REBECCA SCHNEIDER**

This bibliography attempts to include all fiction, in book form, touching upon Jewish life, that has been written in English and published in England and America. It does not include that large class of fiction which has been translated into English. The books are arranged by the country in which the scene of the story is laid.

This list was originally published in 1916 by the New York State Library School, Albany, N. Y., and is here reprinted by permission. The publishers have brought it up to date by including the more recent fiction, appearing since 1916.

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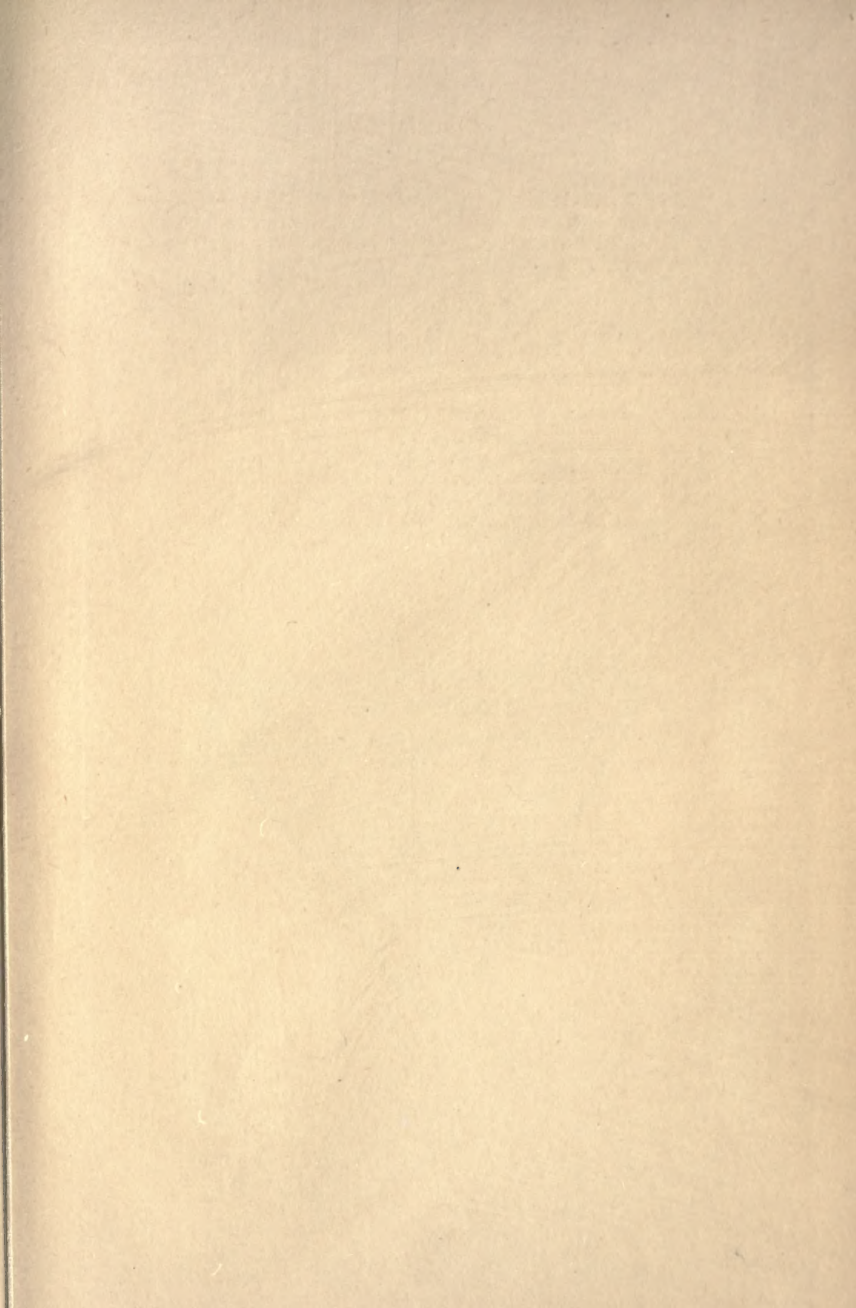
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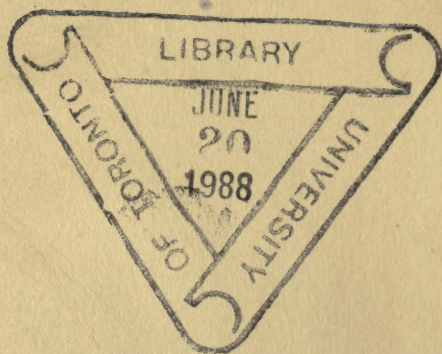


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